THE Hudson REVIEW

FOUNDERS — THE GENERAL LIBRARY
HOWARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
HOWARD UNIVERSITY

BERT O. STATES:
The Art of Dreaming

RICHARD BURGIN:
Conversations with Isaac Bashevis Singer

DERWENT MAY:
The Family—a story

DAVID HUDDLE:
Sketching Hannah—a story

EDMUND L. KING:
Lorca, Guillén, Aleixandre

Poems by A. R. AMMONS, DAVE SMITH, JAY PARINI, JONATHAN CHAVES, GEORGE HITCHCOCK, DOUGLASS PARKER.

Reviews by PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS, VERNON YOUNG, MARVIN MUDRICK, MARCIA B. SIEGEL, GARY DAVENPORT, CHARLES W. MILLARD, LESLIE GEORGE KATZ.

VOLUME XXXI, NUMBER 4 • WINTER 1978-79 • $3.00 PER COPY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Hermit and the Love-Thief

Sanskrit Poems of Bhartrihari and Bilhaṇa

Barbara Stoler Miller

Brilliant translations of the "fragmentary lyrics" of two legendary Indic figures, presenting Sanskrit poetry with its vital mythic context intact. 128 pages, $12.00 cloth, $5.00 paper

Ideology and Imagination

The Image of Society in Dostoevsky

Geoffrey C. Kabat

A searching analysis of Dostoevsky's views of Russian history and society and how these views influenced his writing. 192 pages, $15.00

William Hazlitt

Critic of Power

John Kinnaird

A revealing intellectual portrait of William Hazlitt as seen through his works which illuminates Hazlitt's role in English Romanticism and in the history of modern criticism. 464 pages, $22.50

To order send check or money order to Dept. JN. Individuals must enclose payment (please add $1.00 per order for postage and handling). Institutions may request billing.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

136 South Broadway, Irvington, New York 10533

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contemporary thought and writing at its best

The American Scholar

Keeping up with the most influential thinkers and writers of our time isn't easy, but year after year the *Scholar* does just that. Because year after year the *Scholar* publishes original, thought-provoking articles and essays, poems, memoirs, reviews of books and the arts—and all in a style accessible to anyone with intellectual interests. In any given issue you are likely to find. . .

- *critical commentary on diverse aspects of our culture*
- *reappraisals of important literary and scientific figures*
- *a continuing series of articles about great university teachers*

Subscribe now, and let the *Scholar* bring you the writings of such men and women as Saul Bellow, Edward Shils, Ralph Ellison, Oscar Handlin, Peter Gay, Ellen Moers, Carl Sagan, Alfred Kazin, Hugh Trevor-Roper. Just complete and return the coupon below.

the American Scholar
Department 14
1811 Q Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20009

Please enter my subscription to the *Scholar* for the term checked below.

☐ 1 Year $8.00 ☐ 2 Years $14.50
☐ 3 Years $20
☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Please bill me

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ ZIP ____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editors:

PAULA DEITZ
FREDERICK MORGAN

Managing Editor:

HELEN HANDLEY

Editorial Assistant:

JUDITH HOOVER

Advisory Editors:

HAYDEN CARRUTH
WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD
FREDERICK BROWN
SONYA RUDIKOFF

Associates:

EDMUND T. DELANEY
VINCENT M. MACCHIA

Contributing Editors:

JOHN SIMON, *Theatre*
VERNON YOUNG, *Film*
CHARLES W. MILLARD, *Art*
MARCIA B. SIEGEL, *Dance*
ROBERT S. CLARK, *Music*

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022. It is a member of The Council of Literary Magazines and of COSMEP, and is indexed in the Social Sciences and Humanities Index. Book reviews are indexed in Book Review Index, and poems in Index of American Periodical Verse.

Subscription $10.00 per year in U. S.; foreign including Canada $11.00. Single copy $3.00. Special rate for bulk orders. U. S. distributor: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J. 07110. Library subscriptions in England: Periodicals Division, B. H. Blackwell Ltd., P. O. Box 40, Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford. Back issues and reprints of Volumes I—XXIX available from AMS Press, Inc., 56 East 13th Street, New York N. Y. 10003. Microfilms of Volumes I—XXIX available from University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.

We urge individual and library subscribers to inform us promptly of address changes to insure the continuity of their subscriptions. Claims for missing issues will not be considered after one year.

Manuscripts will not be returned nor inquiries answered unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editors.

Printed in the United States of America. Second Class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and at additional mailing offices. Registered U. S. Patent Office.

Copyright © 1978 by The Hudson Review, Inc. ISSN 0018-702X

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOLUME XXXI
NUMBER 4
WINTER 1978-79

THE Hudson Review

CONTENTS

The Art of Dreaming	BERT O. STATES	571
Weather-Bound; Poverty; Sunday at McDonald's; Density; Vehicle; Response (*poems*)	A. R. AMMONS	587
The White Holster; Raw Light, Mountain Lake; In the Yard, Late Summer (*poems*)	DAVE SMITH	591
The Family (*story*)	DERWENT MAY	596
Translations from Yun Shou-p'ing (*poems*)	JONATHAN CHAVES	605
Sketching Hannah (*story*)	DAVID HUDDLE	609
Beginning the World; Tanya; Illimitable Kingdom (*poems*)	JAY PARINI	618
From Conversations with Isaac Bashevis Singer	RICHARD BURGIN	621
Ars Poetica I: Beginning (*poem*)	DOUGLASS PARKER	631
Going Back There (*poem*)	GEORGE HITCHCOCK	635
The Later Monet	CHARLES W. MILLARD	637
Panov: The Making of a Myth	MARCIA B. SIEGEL	644
Reviews		
Father Knows Best	MARVIN MUDRICK	649

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Necessities of Memory	PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS	663
Poetry Chronicle: First, Second and Third Person—Singular	VERNON YOUNG	677
Lorca, Guillén, Salinas, and Aleixandre	EDMUND L. KING	693
Grandfather Dictionary	GARY DAVENPORT	704
The Primacy of Printing	LESLIE GEORGE KATZ	709
Bennett Award Acceptance Speech, 1978	ANDREI SINYAVSKY	565
Letter to the Editors		564
Notes on Contributors		708
Index to Volume XXXI		716

Letter to the Editors:

October 31, 1978

Dear Editors:

In a recent article in the *Chicago Tribune* about the new *Kenyon Review* I was egregiously misquoted in such a way as to make me seem critical of *The Hudson Review*, *The Sewanee Review*, and the *Partisan Review*. The criticism was neither stated nor implied. I am a longtime reader of *The Hudson Review* and am deeply grateful to it for keeping the torch of ideas and taste alive.

FREDERICK TURNER
Co-editor, *The Kenyon Review*

Gambier, Ohio

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANDREI SINYAVSKY

Bennett Award Acceptance Speech, 1978

Ladies and gentlemen:

Allow me to express my appreciation for the honor accorded me. Because of the way in which my literary career happened to develop, I always wrote without a clear notion of why and for whom I was writing. I wrote outside of any literary environment, outside of literary or socio-political trends, and out of touch with my readers. I wrote in secret, for myself, as it were, and for a few friends who were unknown to me and scattered far and wide. And had I not been tracked down by the KGB for my activity as a writer and sent to a forced-labor camp as an especially dangerous criminal, my name and identity as a human being would probably have remained in shadow, in lovely obscurity. I owe my fame to arrest and imprisonment, which in the Soviet Union sometimes take the place of a prize for literature. And to some extent, this kind of fate—obscurity or arrest—is in keeping with the spirit of art, in the sense that it is not for an author, a writer, to exalt himself over others. An author is destined to vanish, to perish; whereas the art associated with him survives and triumphs, even though it be labeled criminal. An author, as I perceive his role and purpose, is not a creator or craftsman who produces something of value. Instead, he is an agent for conducting and conveying art from one place to another. What I mean is, it is not we who possess art; rather, it is art, as a reality diffused ubiquitously and dissolved in the air, that sometimes takes possession of people and in part manifests itself through them. This is why the history of art encompasses so many unknown and nameless artists, including some of the most remarkable. Evidently, somewhere, deep within its core, art is anonymous and nameless, and is independent not only of life and politics and of society and state; it is also independent of an author's own will, of his own personality and life history. I am glad to have heard this same note sounded in the citation presented to me today: the idea that art is independent and self-sufficient. That art is far more real and free than our notion of real existence presupposes.

[*Translated by Barry Rubin*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pitt Poetry Series

NEW in the

THE BUS TO VERACRUZ
Richard Shelton *$6.95 cloth, $3.95 paper*
"Shelton, like Beckett, is the celebrant in the pit, the poet plying his craft even until the end of words."—*Shenandoah*

A FESTERING SWEETNESS: POEMS OF AMERICAN PEOPLE
Robert Coles *$3.95 paper, $20.00 limited edition*
The renowned child psychiatrist and author captures the hopes, fears, and expectations of the deprived in the United States.

THE TALE OF SUNLIGHT
Gary Soto *$6.95 cloth, $3.95 paper*
Gary Soto writes about his childhood, poverty and human loss, transformation of the body, the seasons, the spirit, and inanimate objects.

THE RUNNER
Gary Gildner *$6.95 cloth, $3.95 paper, $20.00 limited edition*
Gildner's poems "have a true bite that can make outright satire or deflate the past just enough to cause us truly to love it."—*The Antioch Review*

THE NEW POLISH POETRY: A BILINGUAL COLLECTION
Milne Holton and Paul Vangelisti, editors *$9.95 cloth, $4.50 paper*
"The quality of the translations varies from good to excellent."—*Library Journal*

BORDER CROSSINGS
Greg Pape *$6.95 cloth, $3.95 paper*
"Remarkable for its evenness and for its controlled images."—*Library Journal*

WOMAN BEFORE AN AQUARIUM
Patricia Hampl *$3.95 paper*
A work of great skill and compassion, with deep and carefully stated feelings for women and men and clear utterances of human happenings.

THE CLIMBERS
John Hart *$3.95 paper*
"The tough-mindedness and technical excellence of these poems demand and deserve discriminating readers."—*Library Journal*

NEW BOOKS IN THE CARNEGIE-MELLON UNIVERSITY PRESS POETRY SERIES

THE SUN FETCHER
Michael Dennis Browne *$8.95 cloth, $4.50 paper*
Browne's long-awaited second collection. Powerful and moving poems from "Epithalamion/Wedding Dawn" to "Further Stories of Mr. Michael Morley."

A CIRCUS OF NEEDS
Stephen Dunn *$8.95 cloth, $3.95 paper*
"Stephen Dunn is a poet of the most serious darkness for whom joy is a possibility to struggle toward, but not the general condition in which we live."—Dave Smith

THE CROWD INSIDE
Elizabeth Libbey *$8.95 cloth, $4.50 paper*
"An intelligent heart stays with me when I leave these poems. Even when the poem says 'ice' it wants my blood to run."—Tess Gallagher

PAYING BACK THE SEA
Philip Dow *$8.95 cloth, $4.50 paper*
"Dow's poems have a quality of both the unexpected and the inevitable, like grouse suddenly exploding from a bush."—John Vernon

University of Pittsburgh Press
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MICHAEL ANANIA

RIVERSONGS

Anania's second volume of poems is, in the words of poetry editor Laurence Lieberman, "an amazing advance over his splendid and original first volume. While the book as a whole exhibits an impressive range of modes and styles, the opening sequence of river poems evoking the aura of the Lewis and Clark expedition is particularly remarkable. To a degree I have rarely encountered in contemporary poetry, he blends historical materials with the charm of personal witnessing." Anania is the editor of New Poetry Anthology, and his own poems have been published in many journals and in Heartland Two: Poets of the Midwest. His first collection, The Color of Dust, was published by the Swallow Press. Cloth, $7.95: paper, $3.95.

new paperback

LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

UNASSIGNED FREQUENCIES

American Poetry in Review, 1964–77

"This collection of long and short notices originally written for Poetry, and three important reviews (Hudson, Yale, and American Poetry), must rank as our richest available trove of coherent insight into the practice of such masters as Ammons, Wright, Ashbery, Wagoner, Harper, Merwin, and Roethke."—Virginia Quarterly Review. "Lieberman, himself a poet of distinction, is that rare writer who elevates criticism to the level of the very craft he discusses. Whether considering modern masters such as John Berryman and Theodore Roethke or the more current voices of James Dickey and John Ashbery, Lieberman is a deft, creative reader.... Unassigned Frequencies establishes Lieberman as one of poetry's foremost public eyes and ears."—G. E. Murray, Chicago Daily News. $3.95 (also in cloth, $12.00).

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS 54 E. Gregory, Champaign, IL 61820

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING

Walker Percy, "The State of the Novel"
Rudolf Arnheim, "The Late Style in Life and Art"
Pamela McCorduck, "Artificial Intelligence: Visions of the Future"
Karl Popper, "Three Worlds"
Richard Kostelanetz, A profile of Northrop Frye
Interviews with Arthur Miller, Jorge Luis Borges,
Isaac Bashevis Singer
Tom Wolfe on Reality and the Modern Writer
Poetry by A. R. Ammons, AI, Arthur Gregor, Frederick Morgan
Fiction by Joyce Carol Oates, Albert Haley, Olivia Davis

Spring 1979: The Moon-Landing and its Aftermath

Please enter my subscription to the Michigan Quarterly Review, beginning with the Fall 1978 issue:

☐ 1 year ($7) ☐ 2 years ($13) ☐ 3 years ($18)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐ Bill me

☐ Check enclosed, made payable to "The University of Michigan"

3032 Rackham Building, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DENISE LEVERTOV

LIFE IN THE FOREST

Ms. Levertov's tenth book of poems to be published by New Directions in a connection of twenty year's standing follows the 1975 publication of *The Freeing of the Dust*, winner of the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. "It is a pleasure to note that . . . Denise Levertov continues to write exquisitely crafted lyrics which, in their reverence for language and life, make the reader continually aware that the poet's task is, as Levertov has said elsewhere, 'to clarify . . . not answers but the existence and nature of questions' " (Harry Marten, *The Nation*).

Signed limited ed., $35.00; *Trade*, $8.00; *NDPaperbook* 461, $3.95

Forthcoming Spring 1979

COLLECTED EARLIER POEMS 1940—1960. Containing all of Denise Levertov's early books, *The Double Image*, *Here and Now*, *Overland to the Islands*, and *With Eyes at the Back of Our Heads* as well as uncollected verse of the period.

DENISE LEVERTOV: IN HER OWN PROVINCE. *(Insights Volume II: Working Papers in Contemporary Criticism).* Edited by Linda Wagner and containing new and recent critical comment by Marie Borroff, Hayden Carruth, Victor Contoski, Albert Gelpi, David Ignatow, Ralph Mills, Cary Nelson, Robert Pack, editor Linda Wagner as well as previously uncollected essays by the poet herself and two in-depth interviews conducted by the *New York Quarterly* and the *Minnesota Review*.

Comments About Denise Levertov's Poetry

FOOTPRINTS • THE FREEING OF THE DUST • THE JACOB'S LADDER • O TASTE AND SEE • RELEARNING THE ALPHABET • THE SORROW DANCE • TO STAY ALIVE

"During the past ten years Denise Levertov has earned a deserved and increasing number of admirers among both the Dionysians and the Apollonians, the formalists and the experimentalists, the academics and the beats, the way-in and the way-out. This powerful position helps to explain why she has emerged so distinctly from the other poets of her generation, and it is her combination of integrity and energy and technical control that allows her to hold her pivotal place at the spinning center of contemporary American poetry." —*Southern Review*

"How beautifully, once she gets a poem started, she brings it to its satisfying completion, every time." —*Library Journal*

". . . one of the truest and most compassionate singers of our day." —*Milwaukee Journal*

NEW DIRECTIONS 80 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Writers and readings.

Insisting that Emerson's biography is profoundly literary and his literature inextricably biographical, Joel Porte offers both fresh readings of Emerson's best work and a detailed account of how that work—from *Nature* to *The Conduct of Life*—grew directly from his life. $15.95

REPRESENTATIVE MAN
Ralph Waldo Emerson in His Time
Joel Porte

This pioneering work not only explores the intellectual links between the novelist of decorous detachment and the philosopher of feverish extremes but also illuminates a moment in cultural history which produced a radical new view of the relationship between life and art. $15.95

NIETZSCHE, HENRY JAMES, AND THE ARTISTIC WILL
Stephen Donadio

By adhering closely to the text—but not to traditional readings of it—these lively, argumentative readings of *Hamlet, Macbeth, Anthony and Cleopatra,* and *Coriolanus* seek to liberate the Bard from hidebound criticism, approaching characters as people rather than literary constructs. $11.95

SHAKESPEARE'S MAGNANIMITY
Four Tragic Heroes, Their Friends, and Families
Wilbur Sanders and Howard Jacobson

Blending memories and documents, Christopher Fry traces the intricate pattern of events that shaped his family history and his own formative years. Letters, diaries, and photographs enhance this intimate memoir of some remarkable people, not least the playwright himself. $13.95

CAN YOU FIND ME
A Family History
Christopher Fry

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
200 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

Publishers of Fine Books for Five Centuries

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BERT O. STATES

The Art of Dreaming

It seems important to remind ourselves, now and then, that dreams are not simply the stuff that psychiatry is made on but the fair share of imaginative life we all inherit. The analogy between art and dreaming is as old as Plato and as young as the latest book on dream psychology. But if psychologists concede that dreams are *like* art they are generally agreed that it is polemic art, or art with an ulterior motive—wish-fulfillment, ego-reorganization, self-admonishment; a mechanism of vigilance, the guardian of sleep, the mirror of conscience, and so on. The idea that the dream could function *as* art—that is, as an expression of our instinct to imitate—is rarely posed as a serious explanation of why we dream. Occasionally, we come close, as in Richard Jones' *The New Psychology of Dreaming* (1970): "Dreaming [among more crucial purposes] may be seen as a recuperative response to the unavoidable conventionalizing influences of everyday life in literate societies—thus routinely reminding Man of his capacity for the unconventional, possibly creative response."[1] But for the most part these analogies between dream and art are only fleetingly related to any possible purposes dreams may serve in the fulfillment of psychic life.

It should come as no surprise that the most eloquent case for an aesthetics of dreaming is made by the philosopher Gaston Bachelard. And since this essay is something of a friendly amendment to his lonely quarrel with the psychoanalysts, I will begin with a key passage from *The Earth and the Reveries of the Will:*

> But if we limit ourselves, as psychoanalysis often does, to translating symbols into human terms, we neglect an entire field of study—the autonomy of symbolism. . . . It is true that psychoanalysis evaluates dominant impulses by their results. But it has not prepared the means for a true *psychical dynamics,* a precise dynamics investigating the individuality of images. In other words, psychoanalysis merely defines images by their symbolism. As soon as an instinctual image has been detected or a traumatic memory brought to light, psychoanalysis raises the question of *social* interpretation. It neglects an entire domain of re-

[1] Richard M. Jones, *The New Psychology of Dreaming* (The Viking Press, 1974), p. 169.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> search: the very domain of the imagination, whereas the psyche is animated by a veritable *hunger for images*. It wants images. In sum, under the image, psychoanalysis seeks reality; it ignores the inverse investigation that starts from reality in order to seek the positive character of the image. It is in this research that we detect that imaginative energy that is the very mark of the active psyche.[2]

Bachelard is more concerned with reverie than with the nocturnal dream (which, he says in *The Poetics of Reverie,* "does not belong to us. It is not our possession."); but for my purposes the difference in focus is negligible. Thus, for Bachelard, the ubiquitous reverie (or dream) of flight, which psychoanalysts typically interpret as a symbol of sensual desire, becomes an expression of "the aesthetics of gracefulness": "Dynamic imagination suggests, to one who contemplates a graceful line, the wildest substitution: it is you, dreamer, who are the evolving grace. Feel in yourself the *force of gracefulness*. Realize that you are a reserve of gracefulness, a potentiality of flight. Understand that you hold, within your very will, curled volutes, like the young tender fern."[3] As dream interpretation, this would scarcely wash on the couch. But Bachelard is not really interpreting this dream, and certainly not substituting one symbolism (grace) for another (desire). The dream of flight is here not a symbol at all but an "emulation," a "transcendence of being," wherein the dream, in symbiotic conspiracy with the sleeping body, acts out an impossibility, "gives sustenance to our instinct of verticality." The dream of flight is, in an un-Freudian sense, a wish-fulfillment that could not be improved by the possession of real wings.

It is here that psychoanalysis understandably violates the dream in making it the bearer of *other* tidings. It is true that sensual desire is *natural* (as much so as the instinct of verticality): it is "all right" to dream of flying. But flying is not flying: it is *coded desire,* and it must (in analysis at least) be brought back to maternal earth. I realize this is not quite fair. There are probably not many responsible psychiatrists who would live up to this satire. But what comes through most psychoanalytic studies of the dream is the sense that dream images are stored, like parts, in the warehouse of the unconscious, so many portable symbols ready-made to the specifications

[2] Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* trans. Colette Gaudin (Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1971), p. 67. The passage appears in *La Terre et les Rêveries de la Volonté* (Librairie José Corti, 1948), pp. 19–20.

[3] *Ibid.,* pp. 65–66. From *L'Air et les Songes: Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Librarie José Corti, 1943), pp. 28–29.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of so many models of trauma and neurosis. One could hardly expect it to be otherwise, since psychoanalysis deals with such urgent claims. But something essential in dream experience has been overwhelmed by the busy diagnostic highway we have built through its hinterland. And what Bachelard holds before us in his fond romance with reverie and dream is just the perception of this essential: that oneiric life, whatever else it offers, is itself an autonomous world; and if we dream in symbols that is not the dream's proper business: the dream is simply "hungry for images" and will consume whatever food memory and invention offer it. I am not sure whether it would be more accurate to say that the dream is a host for the parasite neuroses bred in the sun of experience, or is itself the parasite which feeds on them. In any case, Bachelard delivers us from the half-truth that the dream is a means to an end, a symbol of something else. From his perspective we are able to confront the dream directly, as he would say, as one of the pure destinies of imagination.

Let us consider Bachelard's idea that the psyche is animated by a hunger for images. There is no point in advancing this as the primary explanation of the dream-mechanism, simply because it is no more provable than any other. But it is a hypothesis I would like to press, if only to see where it leads. Perhaps we can best coax it out of its metaphorical cloak by re-casting it in more phenomenological terms. In Sartre's remarkable essay on the dream in *The Psychology of Imagination* we have a thesis that overlaps Bachelard's. Sartre spends over two hundred pages in this complex work defining the nature of the image and the consciousness which produces it. At certain risk of oversimplification, I would reduce his thesis, or the relevant part of it, to something like this: in the dream, consciousness cannot *perceive,* or reflect, because it is "imprisoned" in the imaginative attitude. What characterizes this attitude is that "it has lost the very idea of reality" and therefore lacks the power to compare the dream with a reality which might perform the "function of a reducer,"[4] or corrective. Thus if the consciousness, in the hypnagogic interval before sleep, somehow conceives a dot of entoptic light as a fish it may become "persuaded" that the fish "has a story" and go on, in a dream, to put the fish into a lake, bring on a fisherman, and the fish will end up on the Archbishop's table. What has happened here is that consciousness is completely "taken in." It enters completely "into the game and in itself [is] deter-

[4] Jean Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination,* trans. Bernard Frechtman (Washington Square Press, 1968), p. 214.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mined to produce syntheses in all their richness, but only in an imaginary way." In short, consciousness is "carried along by its own decline and it continues to lay hold of images indefinitely." This, Sartre says,

> is the real explanation of oneiric symbolism: if consciousness can never take hold of its own anxieties, its own desires, excepting as symbols, it is not, as Freud believed, because of a suppression which compels it to disguise them: but because it is incapable of laying hold of what there is of the real under its form of reality. It has completely lost the function of the real and everything it feels, everything it thinks, it cannot feel or think otherwise than under the imagined form. . . . This is the reason why the world of the dream like that of the reader occurs as completely magical; we are haunted by the adventures of the persons of our dream as we are by the heroes of a novel. . . . This is what gives the dream its unique nuance of fatality. The events occur as if not being able not to happen, in correlation with a consciousness which cannot help imagining them. (pp. 218–220)

In some respects, we are beyond Bachelard here and there is probably a sense in which Sartre's helpless consciousness is not the same thing as Bachelard's hungry psyche. (For one thing, Sartre is not much concerned with the poetics of dreaming.) But we arrive in either case at much the same thing: a consciousness which, cut off from all recourse to "the category of the real," is forced to feed on its own imaginative productions. Consciousness is like a child "imprisoned" in a playpen with only a set of blocks. It has no choice but to realize the possibilities of these instruments of creation, to "produce syntheses in all their richness." Image follows image not because the mind "thinks up" the images (as a novelist thinks up "next" events) but because the world of the dream is one of perpetual motion in which figures are constantly and rapidly transformed, taking what one might call the path of least resistance—or better, the path of greatest suggestibility. To cite one of Sartre's examples: if the dreamer is in danger, he does not say, "I wish I had a revolver"; he suddenly *has* one. "But too bad for him if at that very moment a thought should occur to him which in the waking world would assume the form of 'What if the revolver had been locked!' This 'if' cannot exist in the dream: this rescuing revolver is suddenly locked at the very moment when it is needed" (p. 221).

We must try to see more clearly what sort of dream "logic" produces this radical transformation in the revolver: that is, what exactly is behind these concepts of "hunger" and "fatalism," or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what I have called the path of greatest suggestibility. Let us take a dream situation we all know only too well. It begins, let us say, with the appearance in the dream community of a terrible monster. Everyone is fleeing and the dream shows scenes in which people are being trampled and eaten. You, dreamer, try to escape but your limbs are suddenly sluggish, uncooperative. You manage to hide but the tree or rock is too small to conceal you, *or* the monster "instinctively" knows where you are. You are trapped. If the dream is terrifying enough, you may awake abruptly, but there is an equal chance that you will be seized and eaten, all the while regarding your own dismemberment with mild concern.

There are two ways of looking at such a dream. Freud says that every dream is "absolutely egotistical," it treats of oneself exclusively. In short, if there is a monster at large, you are its Dr. Frankenstein; it has been created in the laboratory of your unconscious, to the specifications of your own fear (like Winston's rats in *1984*). But we may look at the dream in another way. Under the flesh of this private monster is the skeletal form of all monsters. I do not have in mind here a Jungian archetype, but what we may, for convenience, call the law of the "locked revolver." It is the law which (to cite more common instances) may turn a pleasant dream-reunion with one's mother into a nightmare of rejection. It is the law, on a more delicate level of operation, which may convert a slight change in a facial expression into a complete change of personality, or, conversely, may allow mother to suddenly assume the face and body of a complete stranger, though her identity and functional role as mother do not change at all. All of these radical changes—and of course all dream changes are not radical—are brought about by *the drive* of consciousness, its unreflecting seizure of a nuance in the dream image or situation and the conversion of this nuance to something else. And the question now arises: how is this seizure/conversion process controlled by the dream-work? How does the dream know enough to invent *a plot* rather than a chaotic sequence of images? For it is self-evident that some instinct for storytelling survives the decline of consciousness into the dream state and allows the image to "radiate," in Bachelard's word, in an *expressive* direction. Here, obviously, we verge on the true artistic character of the dream, the sense in which it follows, however inefficiently, the same logic which animates fictions, especially (in the case of the monster dream) the dramatic fiction. And before proceeding it would be well to review the nature of this logic.

Following gestalt theory, we may say that in the realm of fiction

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there are "good" or "best" forms of development which imagination naturally seeks out, and one of these forms arises from the dramatic principle of reflexive action. One might define a good drama—but not necessarily *any* play or novel—as one which produces a maximum reversal with minimum improbability. Thus, in the dynamics of drama, the function of verisimilitude, or (if you will) environment, is to act as a viscous medium which impedes the runaway energies of the reversal mechanism. Reversal is under much the same environmental restraint as the mainspring of a watch: without the escapement mechanism, which forces it to unwind in an orderly way, the spring would spend its energy in a single discharge. Put simply, the principle of escapement is inherent in the total environment of a play (including supporting characters, social structures, accidents, etc.), and what I mean by minimum improbability is simply the resistance which this environment, behaving "according to nature," offers to the reflexive drive aesthetically imposed on the play's world.

The dream, in this sense, is a somewhat careless watch. It has, one might say, a more unreliable coefficient of expansion (often moving in jerks and starts, often delaying over "irrelevant" details, etc.). Of course if we knew perfectly what a dream was "up to" (following Freud's idea that there is no such thing as an accidental psychic event) we might find that it is careless only in terms of daytime scruples and that it is ticking away to a far subtler directive than we can imagine. It is possible that in the dream state the very loss of "the category of the real," with all its strictures and demands, opens consciousness to resources of memory and metaphor unknown to the waking poet: these may not be different in kind from those of poetry but only immensely more delicate and complex. What we can say with more certainty is that dreams, being free of obligation to an external audience, may pursue the private or "coterie" interests of the dreamer. Hence the dream has no obligation to *be* dramatic, or to *remain* dramatic, if (as we shall see) its pending material makes other demands. All I am suggesting here is that the sympathies between drama and dream, however different the imperatives which may motivate them, spring from the same constructional logic. Clearly logic is a misleading word, for we are dealing here with something more like an instinct, or a creatural "talent," which requires no poetic skill and manifests itself in some form on all levels of human thought. "Where," Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space,* "is the fear which does not become exaggerated?" Or, we may add, where is the pleasure, the desire, or the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grief? This exaggeration of all concerns, in waking as in dream life, is the natural inclination of the imagination to "go all the way," to envision "the worst of all worst worsts" (to quote *Lear*) or, as the case may be, the best of all best bests. This is the inclination which, in the practical world, tells us to lock the door before retiring ("What if a prowler were lurking?") or to fill the gas tank before crossing the desert. The dramatic dream, in short, outrageously obeys the dialectical impulse, the unuttered "What if?" which regulates all normal life.

All of this is not to refute Freud but to look at the dream from a constructional rather than a clinical perspective. The difference can be quickly illustrated by citing the well-known cartoon (used by Freud and Rank) of the dream of the French nurse: here we move, in eight panels, from a child urinating on the sidewalk to the formation of a stream, a river, and finally an ocean on which increasingly larger boats are navigating the child's unstoppable flow. In the last panel the nurse awakens with the appearance of an ocean liner to find the "wet" child crying in bed. Here, as you would expect, Freud sees the paradigm of the dream as guardian of sleep: "The ingenious artist has in this way cleverly depicted the struggle between an obstinate craving for sleep and an inexhaustible stimulus towards waking."[5] While this may be true, the cartoon also explains how dream images behave dramatically, with or without external stimulus or the craving for sleep. Here we have a perfect illustration of the conversion of a dream image along the path of greatest suggestibility. Once the dream commits itself to an abundant flow of "water" it seizes the obvious associations until it exhausts the potential or reaches a point where something else commands its interest. It is impossible to explain why a particular dream image chooses the dramatic path, but it is a fact that many dreams do, and I would maintain that this principle of dream formation owes as much to the natural genius and satisfactions of fiction as to private neurosis. So I would amend Freud's egotistical theory of the dream to include a law of formal progression: Dr. Frankenstein (the dreamer) indeed creates his own monster; but once animated, made real, by his "science," it becomes the creature of a fiction—it inherits a destiny: to be the best, most monstrous monster possible, to cooperate (like Judas, Iago, or the white whale) in the drama of Frankenstein's undoing. Thus in our dramatic dreams, as in our dramatic fictions, we find ourselves, as

[5] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (Basic Books, 1959), p. 367.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hero-creator, coaxed to the verge of possibility: imagination demands nothing less than our own head on the block, our own body in the path of the monster and the bullet. It does not follow, of course, that the dream is the impersonal creation of fictional rules. Obviously when the image, say, of a hostile mother recurs in an individual's dreams it points to an alarming problem, and this is why psychiatrists are right to place so much emphasis on the dream series. But in a single "normal" dream a hostile mother is simply a highly personalized variation of the monster principle; it means nothing more than that the dreamer's imagination has made efficient use of a fear that has crossed every son's or daughter's mind.

As I've suggested, not all dreams are dramatic in pattern, for the same reason that all fictions are not dramatic. It would presumably be possible to develop companion poetics, along these same lines, for other forms of dream formation. For example, it would seem that we often dream in the "style" of the lyric. Bachelard's dream of flight is a perfect example; another might be the dream in which we stand before a "sublime" and impossible landscape and experience intense awe, fear, or pleasure. In short, the lyric principle dominates those dreams, or parts of dreams, in which some raw emotion asserts itself in comparative isolation from the complexities and contingencies of interpersonal life. The dreamer momentarily comes to rest in an emotion made graphic by an astounding image. Finally, to round out only the basic patterns, couldn't we make a case for the epic dream? This would be a dream which accommodates what Goethe called "circumscribed activity" (as opposed to dramatic intensity or lyric rest); that is, if the dreamer had several diverse things on his mind, none of which were particularly intense or troublesome, or if he were, so to speak, in an expansive mood, his dream might take the path of the episodic or picaresque (travel, picnicing, wandering through a strange or a familiar city, and so on), whereby he could pass successively from adventure to adventure bound only by the loosest theme. Psychologists would probably treat such a dream as a series, especially if each episode were interrupted by a period of dreamless sleep; but I have had wandering or travel dreams which are, apparently, continuous insofar as either my companions, my mode of transportation, or general situation remain relatively constant, though quite different kinds of episodes succeed each other. This would be the dream's way of writing off a number of obligations that had been waiting in line for attention.

We might classify some of Freud's "Parnassus" dreams in this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

category. This is the kind of dream which brings a number of people together who, like the philosophers in the Parnassus painting, are unrelated to a common time or place in the dreamer's real life. Freud maintains that these people always form "a group in the conceptual sense"[6]: they are all, in his phrase, "wolves in sheep's clothing" or diguised aspects of the censored dream-thought. But this seems a severe limitation on the dream's capacities to embody experience. Is it not possible that the dream may have formed this group out of still more basic interests, among which is the need to "bundle," or re-gain, experiences in danger of loss? Could we not hold, with Proust, that one of the deepest "neuroses" of life is the fact that we are only conditionally in possession of the content of our lives and that, in certain dreams at least, we may gather "our" people together (like Guido's circle of "characters" at the end of *8½*) not to symbolize immediate or troublesome pressures but as a response to the past-ness of life and its unreclaimed content? Wouldn't *any* figure from our past be sufficiently memorable, or dreamworthy, on the grounds that it was symbolic of nothing more than a time of life, one of the fixtures of a particular street?

This may seem a modest enough proposal, but the fact is that once one admits the possibility that there are such "trivialities" in dreams, or that dreams may contain innocent images and memories of this kind, the clinical validity of dream "data" is open to question and the foundation of many monolithic dream theories is shaken. I imagine psychiatry would argue that it can prove, on the basis of corroborating evidence from the patient's file, that dreams are never innocent. But given the highly subjective factor in dream analysis, and the immense latitude of its symbolic vocabulary, does this prove anything more than that all self-expression, from the doodle to the choice of a career, is exactly that—the unavoidable product of a particular self? This should not be taken as an argument against dream interpretation, I must add, but as against the widespread premise that the dream is *caused* by what it may simply be carrying with it (Would we accuse the bloodstream of deliberately carrying poisons through the system?). Freud's egotistical theory of dreams, as psychologists like Werner Wolff have suggested, is the monument of one of the century's more sizeable Faust complexes; but that is not why *The Interpretation of Dreams* was written. Surely it would be wrong to deny that Freud was guided in this enterprise, however visible his ego on every page, by something

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 314.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we may call a passion for the truth, no more or no less mysterious, or neurotic, than a passion to recover the past.

In all of these cases it is not a matter of the dream following the rules of poetry, but something more like the opposite. For these primary modes of poetic discourse (drama, lyric, epic) do not persist through history out of obedience to tradition but because they are natural tendencies by which imagination either formally or informally (as in dream, reverie, or the improvised bedtime story) perceives and expresses the basic rhythms of experience. These (and there may be others) constitute a loose and endlessly variable grammar of dream formation, and plays, novels, epics, and lyric poetry are simply high refinements of this grammar, produced for a waking audience which lacks the category of the unreal. Presumably there are as many "forms" and purposes in dream experience as there are in art, precisely because the dream, as the "primary process," is the ur-form of all imaginative thought. It is certainly the art we cannot help making. I would willingly grant that much of this borders on tautology were it not that so much effort has been spent proving that the dream is guided exclusively by an urgent need to express the disturbed self, as opposed to the self's urgent need to express the possibilities of imaginative experience.

Far and away, the most interesting "technical" problem of the dream is why we dream in symbols; or, to take a restricted case, why the dream will suddenly abandon a fairly realistic development and produce an image, or a character, which to the waking mind makes sense only *as* a symbol. Here, of course, the two most influential theories are that the dream uses symbolic equivalents to sneak repressed ideas past the censor (Freud), and/or the dream "thinks" in terms of symbolic archetypes which are somehow imprinted on the infra-personal unconscious (Jung). From a purely poetic standpoint, a provocative alternative to these theories is advanced by Kenneth Burke in a little-known essay titled *"Somnia ad Urinandum."* Burke suggests that the dream may not be repressing anything and it may have nothing archaic on its mind; it may simply be faced with a common problem: how to find the right word? In poetry, as in all discourse, a wide range of images and analogies can always serve to symbolize, or "sum up," any particular motive. In conscious life, we can refine our metaphors and symbols to a sharp edge of accuracy and expressiveness. "But in sleep," Burke says, "when the critical faculties are less exacting than during times of maximum alertness, a dreamer might be temporarily 'satisfied' with any mode of representation that re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

motely resembles the motive or complex of motives with which his dream happens to be preoccupied."[7] In other words, the "sheer complexity of the problem" the dream faces, and (I would add) the rapidity with which it must invent, forces it to settle (by waking standards) for less than perfect imagery. Dreams, like poets, "nod" now and then.

Burke modestly poses this idea as an "occasional cause" of the strangeness of dream symbolism, and of course there is no reason why it may not work cooperatively with the causes advanced by Freud and Jung. What is refreshing about it is that it treats the dream as being humanly fallible; whereas most psychologists, locked into a scientific perspective, seem to credit the dream with a deadly accuracy that enables it to throw up perfect symbols as reliably as a cardiogram signals symptoms of trouble in the body. If the meaning of the symbol is obscure it is because it is "hidden," not because it is confused. Moreover, a Freudian would probably say that this hiding process does not have to occur suddenly, simultaneous with the dream itself. If, as Wilhelm Stekel maintains, we dream unceasingly, by day and night, it would follow that the symbols of the dream are (or may be) carefully cured in the unconscious, much as a poet is said to "write" his poem when he isn't even thinking about it. But this, even if true, does not really dispose of Burke's thesis. Burke is suggesting that occasionally the dream may be confronted with conflicting motives: one possibly very immediate (the need to urinate is his main example, but we could easily add others), and one long-range (any pressing or traumatic problem from the day-residue or from life in general). This sudden clash of motives would confuse the dream and bring it to a crossroads from which there is no *right* direction to proceed. So what may seem to be a symbol of repressed fear is really a compromise, if not a blown fuse brought on by overloaded circuits.[8]

To say that an image is "bungled," of course, is not to imply that it fails as far as the dream is concerned. While Burke emphasizes the "inadequacy" of the dream symbol to sum up highly complex motives (a judgment made on *this* side of the dream), we might as

[7] *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (University of California Press, 1966), p. 345.

[8] I should mention one other argument, on behalf of psychiatry. The analyst would quite rightly respond to this theory by saying that even if it were true that dream symbols are often quick compromises this would not affect the overall accuracy of the dream as a diagnostic tool. For the object of dream interpretation is not to understand the dream but to understand the dreamer; the true key lies in the dreamer's response to his dream and to the give-and-take of the analytic session in which the dream plays only a corroborative part.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

easily emphasize the *internal* adequacy of any symbol the dream might draft to do its emotional work. All that may be needed, in other words, is a blank check on which the dream can write the emotional sum it wants to expend. This is possible—and here I am effectively following Sartre's line—because in the dream state the emotion may precede the image, call it into being. In this sense, we might compare the dream to the rough draft of a fiction. Anyone who has tried "to write" knows the frustration of reaching a minor impasse in his story. "What I need here," he might say, "is an event which will influence my hero to make his big decision." As yet, the event is not clear in mind; but the emotional *force* needed to move the story forward is quite clearly "felt." So we have a narrative gap filled by pure or as-yet-ungrounded emotion. But even though the writer has not yet found the event, he can, as it were, write an "X" in his plot, or supply a weak substitute that will serve temporarily. In this sense, we may say that the story is emotionally perfect, though artistically unrealized. And it is precisely in this sense that we are all Shakespeares when we dream. In certain complex cases at least, all that is minimally necessary for *the flow* of the dream is that it find images that can be endowed with emotion. Thus, while dreaming, say, in the key of terror, or having established an atmosphere of impending terror, one might be terrified by the sudden appearance of a caged rabbit he had seen that afternoon in a pet shop. This rabbit is not necessarily a terrifying symbol of, say, imprisonment, though the cage may have served in a minor way to trip the terror switch; it may simply be a tentative analogue that is conscripted and bathed in terror. By fictional standards it is hardly a successful character, but it is, so to speak, a rabbit in the hand. And given the amazing speed with which the dream unfolds, how, as Burke would say, could the dream be expected to come up, on the spot, with the perfect carrier of the emotion of terror, especially if this rabbit from the day-residue had complicated things still further by hopping about in the environs of the dream?

The other thing that is refreshing about Burke's thesis is that it suggests dreams may deal in symbols simply because they are the natural tools of art. Like the poet, the dream wants to get the precise shade of its experience. For instance, suppose a dream wanted to dramatize the act of cutting a diamond but wanted also to recover the delicacy and tact of such an operation. Could the unlikely tool to be used for this purpose not be a flower petal or a feather? And in such a case, need the interpreter chase about, in his mystification, among the various sexual symbolisms of flowers in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

order to account for this radical "censorship" of the diamond-cutter's proper equipment? In other words, should we not allow the creative possibility that dream artistry might employ anything as a metaphor for its preoccupations as long as it caught the quality of the experience? If we think of the symbol as standing in an *adjectival* relationship to the noun to be symbolized, *which the dream already knows,* we might more fully account for the peculiar aura of vividness that attends the dream. Let us take a dangerously sexual case which might stand as a paradigm of dream censorship. This dream of a twenty-four-year-old college student comes from the collection of Calvin Hall, who is also taken by its charms, inasmuch as he mentions it frequently in his work on "normal" dreams:

> I got out of bed and went into the bathroom and attempted to turn on the water faucet. I turned and turned but no water came out. I then decided to call a plumber. Soon afterwards the door opened and an individual dressed in coveralls approached me. Upon closer examination I discovered the plumber was a female. I scoffed at the idea of a lady plumber, but unruffled she went to the basin, turned the faucet, and water immediately flowed. An emission occurred.[9]

I should preface my remarks by saying that Hall is that rare psychologist who is keenly appreciative of the creative aspect of dreaming. He is strenuously opposed to the Freudian idea that the dream symbol is a disguise behind which repressed materials are smuggled into the dream. "The symbols of dreams," he says, "are there to express something, not to hide it,"[10] and in illustration he cites another dream in which this same young man, finding himself in another sexual situation, has no trouble, as it were, calling a spade a spade: "I tried to seduce her only to discover that my organ seemed to be too large for her vagina, thus making intercourse impossible."[11] In other words, it is just as likely that a dream will be "outspoken" as that it will hide behind a symbol. And the question then occurs: "Why did the dreamer choose to represent his sex organ by a faucet?" Hall gives several answers: "the choice of faucet expressed [his] conception of his penis on the night of February 22, 1948"; he was "dissatisfied with the referent object and creat[ed] a better one. Our young dreamer thought to himself, 'wouldn't it be nice if my penis could be turned on and off as easily

[9] Calvin S. Hall, "Out of a Dream Came the Faucet," *Psychoanalysis and The Psychoanalytic Review,* 49 (Winter 1962), p. 113.
[10] Calvin S. Hall, *The Meaning of Dreams* (McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 95.
[11] "Out of a Dream Came the Faucet," p. 114.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as a faucet.' No sooner thought than visualized" (p. 114). And in still another article, Hall adds that this faucet represents a "purely mechanical conception of sex."[12]

However outrageous it may seem, I think we can go beyond these explanations if we apply the techniques of literary criticism to the dream: in other words, if we try to view this dream as the product of creative logic rather than the personal whimsy of the dreamer. To begin: it fairly bristles with questions relating to the whole mystery of dreaming and the extraordinary use the dream makes of the poetic principles of anticipation, development, reversal, and (I can't avoid a pun here) climax. There is nothing extraneous in it, at least as reported, and I think that even if it were embellished in the telling, it is faithful in spirit to dreams we have all had. It is true that most dreams are not this well organized, for here we have an unusually succinct summing up of what must (as I hope to show) have been a complex situation.

What is lacking in this dream is the aura of fantasy. It is a "realistic" dream with none of the surreal images that often intrude in dreams. It could, in fact, have actually happened—that is, a young man could have been sexually aroused, have also had a frozen bathroom faucet, and have called a plumber who turned out to be the perfect (if unexpected) answer to both of his problems. But of course this is not the case and we are faced with the question: why did he symbolize his penis as a faucet? Why was he so "dissatisfied," on this particular night, with his "referent object"?

Here indeed is a polemic dream, an example of "useful" art. But the small miracle is that it did not simply accomplish its purpose (ejaculation) by producing an image (like the rabbit) which could be endowed with sexual energy. Instead, the dream produced a plot, a chain of events which *led to* ejaculation, though nowhere in this plot do we find anything (an unclothed woman, a sexual "pass") which has an openly sexual character (as in the young man's other dream). Why should the dream be so roundabout—so "Jamesian," one might say—when this is clearly not necessary to produce an emission? If the dreamer simply wanted a symbol which would represent a "mechanical conception of sex," it would have been easy to invent a faucet, or a faucet-like penis, without the elaborate subterfuge of a lady plumber. In other words, if the

[12] "A Cognitive Theory of Dreams," *Journal of General Psychology*, 49 (1953), p. 277.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dream is simply symbolizing in order to express the mechanical quality of sex, or even if it is repressing open sexuality, there is a considerable amount of excess art-work in the dream; and this leads one to believe that that art was necessary for the expression of a far richer experience than would interest a clinician, if only because the richness is sub-diagnostic.

I suggest that the faucet *is* a disguise, but not in the Freudian sense of a repression. It is a disguise that was necessary to the internal success of the dream situation. Here we have a symbol of a high order of expressiveness; not only is the faucet a symbol of the male organ (in this case, an absent "noun") but of a particular *social situation* that has nothing to do with sex. In fact, we have a dream situation very like Burke's confused dream in which the dreamer feels the sudden urge to urinate during a lofty enactment of his Oedipus Complex. The difference is that the faucet dream manages to steer brilliantly (if one can use the word) between its "high" and "low" motives by producing a symbol that is literally a double-agent. We might describe the dream situation as follows: the precise nuance of sexual encounter that was on the dreamer's mind, on this night, clearly involved the need for sexual release, rather than, for example, the titillation of seduction or the pleasure or frustration of the sexual act itself. The means of release, in any case, is absent as the dream begins and must be imported to the dream. Dealing with these two "facts," the dream was compelled, on one hand, to invent an excuse to bring a partner to the room and, on the other, to find a penis symbol which would suggest "flow" (as opposed to tumescence, sensitivity, or any other characteristic of sex or the sex organ). In the face of this demanding problem, the faucet was an excellent compromise because it so "realistically" displaced the dream's sexual objective into a normal social channel. In short, knowing nothing else about the young man's private life or his possible sex-neurosis, I'm suggesting that this particular dream called for the observation of a certain protocol. The euphemistic premise of the dream is that it reach its nefarious end by keeping things above board, by deviating the woman's sexual function to the realm of household repair. Seen in this light, there is just enough fetishistic subtlety in the faucet "device" to bring on an orgasm through the very perfection of the disguise. Skillfully, the dream harnesses the world of public service to the private needs of the body without so much as a whisper about sex. In fact, we might locate the fictional perfection of this tactic in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those downright "sexy" scenes in Henry James, the master of erotic symbolism, that take place over high tea or in the manicured gardens of London and Boston. Finally, what a rich detail the "scoffing" is, considered as a conspiracy of dream and dreamer. Here is a stroke of casuistry designed to keep the sexual encounter where the dream has pitched it. "Unruffled" indeed, the woman turns on the faucet (which was, after all, in good working order) and leaves (can we see a certain *hauteur* in her departure?), the unsuspecting victim of a male fantasy acted out without risk of embarrassment or loss of face.

This is of course a literary reading of the dream's motive; but surely it is no more subtlized than many of Freud's or Stekel's symbolic decodings. If I have been unfair in selecting an unusually complete dream, or have credited a rather tawdry one with too much finesse, it is not because the point rests on proving that this, or any, dream is as "good" as the most mediocre fiction. I have simply tried to approximate a certain integrity common to dreams though not so available in most dream plots. For example, it would be difficult to discuss that far more pervasive kind of dream genius which arises when we create a wholly convincing "character" out of fragments of remembered life or when we place an acquaintance in a situation perfectly expressive of his speech and manner: we write, as it were, a chapter of his life he will never live, yet he lives it to the hilt, *in character*—so much so that we can only regard him, on the next meeting, with a thief's sense of guilt, or relish.

Certainly the point is not that psychiatry is wrong about the dream; it is simply half right: there is a creative overlay in dreams that is no more explained by psychoanalysis than Kafka's novels are explained by his obsession with paternal authority. There is probably nothing mysterious about this. It is a talent we all possess. But it is less related to that rare ability to create art in waking life than to the natural sympathy with which we receive the art of poets and novelists and know, though we could not say why, where it succeeds and where it falters and tells lies about life.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A. R. AMMONS

Weather-Bound

A strong southwester
brings up the south
and our moths having been
already under snow
and freezing air
waken and search for
prominences, pebbles, straw tips,
to flutter away from:
but they want to go where
the wind is coming from:
they lift off and the
wind blusters them high:
they flutter hard
but glance away to the
right or left or
fly backward forward:
maybe they really want
to go north
but must do so into the wind
or tumble wind-fraught
against tearing shrubs:
overnight a shower barely wetting
settles them out of the air again
and seals their wings
to macadam and concrete:
surface tension sets in
like gangrene
and their dust softens, mud:
this takes fluttering
and destination out of them:
they sit
like aircraft, headed south,
their minds as if not
on the controls or removed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poverty

I'm walking home from, what,
a thousandth walk this year
along the same macadam's edge
(pebbly) the ragweed rank
but not blooming yet,
a rose cloud passed to the
east that against sundown would be
blue-gray, the moon up nearly
full, splintering
through the tips of street pine,
and the hermit lark downhill
in a long glade cutting
spirals of musical ice, and I
realize that it is not the same for
me as for others, that
being here to be here
with others is for others.

Density

A bluejay's the clarified
bush's only ornament:
except for two or three
tan-fine leaves he
rattles on a twig:
and there's where summer's
hidden trickle
got its tune, the end of
a corrugated pipe
undercrossing the road:
and down there
farther where density

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hid all but the hermit
lark's song
is a gang of wires, once
woodvine: sight is to be
pushed off, filtered
out, darkened down: winter
putting so much
away leaves us
too much room to see.

Sunday at McDonald's

In the bleak land of foreverness no
one lives but only, crushed and buffeted,
now: now, now, now every star glints

perishing while now slides under and
away, slippery as light, vapory as time:
what can butterflies do or clear-eyed

babies gumming french fries—nature
is holding them, somehow, veering them
off into growth holdings, things

brought to peaks of splendor, sharp
energies burring into each other to
set off new progressions through the

rustle and mix, rot and slush: is
this the way it is: sometimes a man
will stand up, clear and settled as

a bright day, and seem to look through
the longest times and roilings to
something still, star-bending, fixed ahead.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vehicle

I take myself, in
the goal of my destiny,
the way the wind takes
me, something to
stir, run, and dismiss,
or the way dust
or falling snow take
me (obstruction,
scaffolding) a form
of delay—that is,
nothing to nothing:
but meanwhile my
body knows the wind and
calls it out,
and dust and snow,
the running brook,
praise themselves seen in
my praising sight.

Response

Fuzzy baby-spider ball
hanging in the spirea bush,
the harder the wind blew the
tighter
it shrank, shaking and
bobbing, but after the wind
calmed widened airy with radiality:
but yesterday late
I blew one time hard on it and it
spilled spooling to the ground:
fine beads, the babies stirred,
cleaning themselves up in
reverse web-flow: one bead
went off a way on a haywire web
but, back to mainline, came
stringing up, the final bead:
dark tightens the ball hard.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DAVE SMITH

The White Holster

Ribbed with red glitter, those glass studs catch
and hold the early lights my mother
has raised in her longing. Her
hands waist-high cradle my one
gift, lovingly, while behind
her crisp black suit
the shragged shadow
of the little cedar hides
in the brilliant blinking of bulbs.
Out of the light, in the dark crooked
arm of the stairs, I wait and want
to enter the room where she is. I am

still a child, though already I know the meaning
of snow on the high hall window, that
incessant pecking like the few
chickens left, ruthless before
whoever's hand scatters the gold;
this year the tiny Jesus hangs
only in a bare box and the tree
keeps nothing to hide its wounds.
My naked feet slide on cold steps,
my hands toying with the dark,
for I do not want to hurry

to find her in the middle of a moment that is ice-
bright and all there will be of Christmas.
Long ago she called but I dawdled
in my bed to see how thin was
the white bulk of a boy's breath,
wanting and not wanting
to know how poor we had become
with a war raging and a father gone.
With each step I have grown larger
in her waiting, but am still
only a boy with no gift
except words

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that, in memory, bristle and are evergreen as sadness
and love. How long it takes to come to this
room where she waits, huddles in no word
but in the sepia of her face bent
over the white holster. The gun
suddenly silvers like a long stroke
of heavy moonlight from her body
and I see now, again, the leather
stiff and white, the red tears
of glass, the black fake fur
in tufts imagining a pony's shape,
her arms, light-bruised, extended

as if rooted in the cedar's delicate and heart-stopping
sorrow that is, now, the failing light
far off in my father's eye. Words
fill that room like a bird-rush
at the feet and I see her again
give me the gift of herself
and the gaudy toy of love's
scrimping in this world. *It is*
what you wanted isn't it, what he said
in his last letter you would most want?
Overhead tonight, in December,
I watch the stars blink
in and out of quiet explosions
like the memory of a father's love
when it is only, for a boy, what is
everywhere and nothing yet lost.

It is Christmas now and I have scrawled the note. She,
who holds it in her hands, says he did not leave
because he did not love us, but because
there is always a war and maybe
he will have no time to answer.
I remember his car turning to a spot
of white dust, I remember the sag
deep in her flesh and black suit,
I remember the snow clenching

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that house in glare-light.
All day I would draw my gun, more
and more filled with joy,
ignoring the cedar and her tears.
Happy, I would shoot at her, *happy,*
until at last the words banged
from her mouth as she held me,
saying *Yes, yes, yes.*

Raw Light, Mountain Lake

The world has gone swimming in the night
and now, stepping from your bedroom of logs,
you see the dream goes on without you.
As if you were only the quickened musk
of an ancestral trunk momentarily opened,
the dazzled world stands still to remember.
It is as if you were something and are now
almost something, but are not. Motion,
not a leaf falling, more a leaf's faint
shadow half in memory. The world is full,
you are of this fullness, only you are
what the world cannot remember in first
raw light and nakedness. It waits a moment
like a woman shivering, dark water still on
her, ankle deep in mist, the sun purple
bright in each curve and coiling particular,
that motionless creamy world unbearably
raking you with passion. Why have you lived
if not for this love? Only it waits in a cry
of elemental light nothing explains, nothing,
and does not seem to remember that throbbing
you shared so long ago, which was simple joy.
The world stares at you like a moronic angel.
That is why the rage crawls and the scream,
wordless as a hot gust, pulls the lips back
on your sharp teeth. Keep me, keep me, keep

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me the bird drills through trees playing
on the water's body, but this morning
your arm did not fall casually on anything
loved and your blood was chilled. Now words
fail, or the world does not hear, and now
the slit of your room fills with your dust
and tries to remember who was here, and why.

In the Yard, Late Summer

In the yard the plum tree, wild
with a late summer wind,
shakes its thousand planets
of sweet flesh.
Does it mean to resist
this gush that drops
one order of things
into another? It keels,
leaning at forces we can't
see, can't know the edge of.
Its memory keeps only two
commands: this lives, this
dies from the licking sun.
There is no metaphor
to reveal what it has known
in its brooding years.
We watch the purple fruit fall
as leaves sheer and snap
and nail themselves to light.
Between us the wind
is a word seeking a shape,
hovering in passion
and risen from the ground
of memory clenched
in roots and long tendrils.
Hearing that, knowing ourselves
wingless and bestial, we wait

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the sun to blow itself out,
for the return of that first
morning of pink blossoms
when we saw the dark stains
of our feet printing
what we were on that
dew-bed of the world.
The tree, too, waits
in its old unravelling
toward a naked silence,
its language wild and shocked.

B·O·O·K·S
& Co.

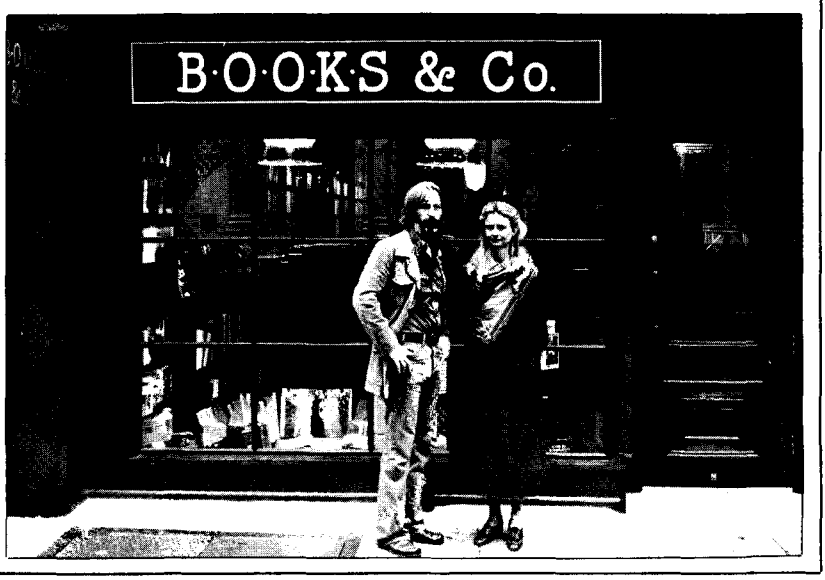
939 Madison Avenue
'three doors south of the Whitney'
New York City 10021

'phone (212) 737·1450

"FINALLY A GREAT BOOKSTORE HAS COME . . ."
—THE VILLAGE VOICE

"IT HAS ALREADY PROVOKED ONE NEW YORK LITERARY PERSON TO EXCLAIM: 'I WISH I COULD LIVE THERE' "
—THE NEW YORKER

"BOOKS & CO. IS A *BOOKSTORE* . . ."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DERWENT MAY

The Family

"I'VE FINISHED IT, DARLING," called Brian Pleasant, as he came down the stairs.

No one answered in the silent house. But the sun poured into the light-panelled hall through the open front door, and a blackbird went on singing on the porch outside, its notes vibrant and smothered, as if it were singing from inside dense foliage, though it was only the end of February.

The blackbird dropped off the porch and swooped low across the garden as Brian went out. Bettina, his daughter, was squatting on the path of old, red bricks, with her face almost touching the ground. She looked up at him, turning her head so that the sun shone on her face from behind.

"Daddy, I'm kissing an ant," she called. "It keeps running away."

His wife, Jane, was standing on the lawn, wrapped in a silky green quilt. In the sun she was as blonde as Bettina. She smiled at him sleepily. She was always happy, he thought, when she was sleepy; and she was sleepy for a great deal of the time. She read till late into the night, but still got up early in the morning, making breakfast and dressing Bettina very slowly, going in and out of the garden. He'd seen her out there in nightdress, raincoat and umbrella some mornings.

"It's done!" he shouted.

Jane tilted her head back with a gesture like Bettina's, a smile spreading over her whole face. She gave a little laugh—half laugh, half sigh.

"I'm going to Crown Farm to see if there's anything I should add. Then I'll probably send it off."

"O.K. See you for dinner."

"O.K."

He bent down and touched Bettina's head as he passed her. She lifted her face again and pouted him a kiss. Sitting in the car, outside the garden gate, he looked back at the house. They'd worked very hard, six years ago, to convert it, and they'd done it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

well. The honeysuckle was climbing everywhere over the white-washed farmhouse walls, and in the center, above the porch, the great picture window they'd put in reflected the tree-tops in its milky depths.

Out on the road, he sang "*Voi che sapete*" to himself, what lines of it he could remember. He noticed they'd been round marking the elm-trees that had to come down along the roadsides. They'd done a thorough job, slashing off big plaques of ivy and bark from each tree-trunk, and painting a firm, white "O" on the soft exposed wood. All these roads were lined with elms; and a lot were going to come down, it seemed, some of them quite small ones. Out beyond them, he glanced continually at the sloping fields, which were swimming in sunlight this morning. He loved this Wiltshire countryside, so warm and gentle after Salisbury Plain—he always saw it like that, having come to it first driving from London.

It only took him fifteen minutes to get to the Polytechnic, in the small town on the Avon where it had been, in his opinion, so sensibly located. Some departments of the Poly were in the old, high woollen mills that rose like bird-cages above the town. Sociology was in an undistinguished Victorian villa on the hillside—they hadn't got big equipment like the engineers and chemists. But its brown fake timbers glowed a fine chestnut in the sun this morning.

He went into the staff common-room, expecting to find the squad there, since it was Wednesday morning. There were no lectures that day, but the squad came in regularly. They liked to grumble and plot, it was well known, on a Wednesday. And sure enough, there they were, all four of them, sitting on the long, square-backed, red sofa by the wall. It might have been put there specially as a symbolic seat for them—and they'd taken to it without a qualm. He couldn't really get on with any of them, except Anna, and she mocked him the worst of all. There she was, at the end of the sofa, grinning at him now. She always wore the same bright red jumper and blue jeans, these days.

"Hallo, Mount," said Burnett, who was sitting next to her. (The tallest man in the department, Brian was known to it as Mount Pleasant.) "Don't look so worried."

"Oh, please, be as sympathetic as you like," said Brian, "if it takes your mind off your own troubles." Burnett was the oldest of the squad, a small, ginger-moustached man who was studying what jobs the former woollen workers had taken up. He'd been knocked down by one of them the week before.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anna laughed, and looked with a mock frown at Brian. "We don't have troubles," she said to him. "Didn't you know that? We have problems, which we then solve." She shook her short black hair and stretched her legs out still further in front of her. She wore her jeans, Brian noticed, like most of the girls around the Poly, with the zip bulging open at the top.

"Lucky you," he said.

Bill Webber, a younger man, with hair curling over his shoulders, gave an ironic grunt, then sighed. "Anna's such a purist," he said. "No bloody troubles!—that'll be the day. Roll on, solutions!"

"Anna," said Brian. "Want to come out to Crown Farm? I finished the book this morning, crack of dawn, but I just want to go out there once more."

He noticed that Rob, the other young man on the sofa, with a black, rainbow-shaped moustache, moved before Anna did, pulling himself upright. But then Anna jumped to her feet.

"Meeting your family, am I?" she said. "Well, you know what I mean!"

"I've got the car outside."

"Anna!" said Rob, but she appeared not to notice.

"Meddler!" said Burnett, as Anna and Brian turned away.

Brian knew what Burnett meant. He didn't believe in Burnett's, and the others', kind of sociology. At any rate, he couldn't practise it. His book was about the effect on children of a parent leaving home. His own researches were inevitably very random and unmethodical—just for three years, now, going to as many troubled homes as the local social workers and probation officer would let him get into. And when he was in them, he was always liable to get involved—letting people talk, giving a bit of advice, giving a bit of help to the social worker when it was wanted. At Crown Farm, he'd done rather more than that. The woman, Mrs. Crale, had sworn her husband would come back if she could make the house more comfortable—put in a gas-stove, patch up some leaks, get the lavatory working properly. Crale was a jobbing gardener of a pretty low grade, a poacher probably, and he'd moved in with a mother and daughter in a village a few miles away. Brian had got Mrs. Crale a gas-stove, and spent quite a bit of time working on the house—and lo and behold, Mr. Crale had returned one night! Already you could see the children were less sulky, more talkative, playing better with their friends at school.

All this was known in the department, and frowned on as unprofessional. Yet the squad, especially, were themselves exalted med-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dlers—all Marxists of one colour or another, all tied up with the International Socialists, all noisy enemies of the Labour Party.

Brian and Anna hardly spoke till they were out of the town. As they burst from under a tunnel of high trees, on to a road that ran between fields, the sun sparkling on its surface, she said to him, "Why are you going out to these people today, Mr. Mount?"

He laughed. "I don't know," he said. "I really don't know. I just thought. . . ."

"Why did you come into the department, for that matter?"

He found himself laughing still louder. "I don't know either. I think—well, I've just finished a book, my first book—I couldn't just go to the Post Office!"

"I think you're very simple."

"I take it as a compliment."

"Right!"

"Let's go, though. Come and see them. They're friends of mine, I want to see them."

"I've never even met your real family. As I pointed out."

"You must."

"Liar! You've got a wife and daughter, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"And you don't want them meeting a woman like me."

"Are you so different, then?"

"I don't know. I've not met them. Judging by you, I should think I am. I'm not a bit sentimental. That doesn't mean what people often take it to mean, by the way."

"What's that?"

"It doesn't mean. . . . Well, let me tell you this. I'm a very uncompromising person."

Brian took his eyes off the road for a moment and glanced at her. Her dark eyes turned sharply to meet his.

"What does Rob think about that?" he said.

"Rob?"

"Yes. He jumped up when you did."

"Oh, Rob. He's so sentimental it's like a bale of wool between us. That's how near we get to having our hands on each other."

"Mr. Crale's unsentimental. He came back when I put a cooker in his house."

"What a sensible man!"

As they turned a bend, he saw a kestrel hovering over one of the fields, its wings pumping away to keep it where it was in the air.

"Look—a kestrel," he said to Anna.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What's that?"

"There, a hawk hovering—look!"

"That flapping thing."

"Yes."

"It doesn't look very hawkish."

"Well, it is. It'll put paid to a mouse in a minute."

She leaned back in her seat and laughed again—a laugh with a kind of satisfied sigh in it, reminding him of Jane's laugh in the garden this morning. He felt a twinge of satisfaction with himself at having, apparently, made two women laugh like this today. But the next moment it made him feel very remote from Anna. He saw Jane wrapping the green quilt round herself as the blackbird swooped by her, and the picture filled him with sharp pleasure. And in the same instant, a slight sadness touched him as Anna dwindled away.

She was back to life-size almost at once. She laughed again and said, "You know such a lot about what's happening round you, don't you? You're like a tree, like a sort of walking tree—you've got your roots, your place in the world, but you go walking around too, having a good look at things, seeing things—I do like you, Mr. Mount!"

"Aren't you the same, Anna?"

"The same! Of course I'm not the bloody same!" She sat upright now, gripping the edge of the glove compartment in front of her. "I'm just a slum child who found to her amazement she could understand Durkheim. That's what I am! My father read *Dandy,* I read Durkheim! But you don't need to be a slum child to understand Durkheim—it's no advantage. *You* understand him, don't you? It's obvious you do. But you don't need him. I needed him, Brian, I need him now—I haven't got anything else, you know! That's why I sit with those guys on the red sofa."

She slumped back against her seat, looking straight out of the window ahead of her.

"Sorry," Brian said.

Her torso sprang up once more. "Fucking sorry!" she said. "What the hell are you talking about? What the hell are you being sorry for? You haven't done anything, have you? Just shut up now!"

His mind was surprisingly calm as they drove on. He did as she had asked, and watched the countryside, undistracted—so he found—by her hunched-up body, his arm touching her shoulder every now and then. He noticed that the woodpigeons were begin-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ning to collect in the tree-tops, feeding on the softening buds. One tumbled off a thin spray at the top of a poplar tree, and fluttered down on to a lower branch.

Soon afterwards, he stopped the car. Anna looked up. "Are we there?" she asked.

"Almost."

"Sorry," she said.

"There's no need. Fucking sorry," he said with a slight effort.

She laughed. "Yes, there is. In this case there is. I shouldn't have said all that."

"Anyway—I usually walk the last bit. It's a bumpy road for the car, and it's nicer walking by the canal." The Kennet and Avon ran through these fields—they could see the thin silver line of it heading straight towards some distant slopes.

They parked the car on a grass verge and got out, then cut across a field and turned on to the narrow towpath. It was quite silent—they could hear a lorry on the road a long way away.

"Where do you come from?" said Brian.

"Stoke-on-Trent."

"Don't know it."

"Don't, then!"

"You like these fields?"

"They're lovely."

The sky was still cloudless, the sun still not very high. Colts-foot was growing in patches of bright yellow on the edge of the canal. They came to a low bridge, where a farm-road crossed the canal. As they passed beneath it, their two shadows fell on the underside of the arch, and they stopped to look.

"The shadows are moving," said Brian. "Look! And we're not!"

In a moment they saw why. These were not their shadows—their shadows were on the water, and what they were looking at under the arch was the reflection of their shadows, moving with the other light as the water trembled slightly.

Brian turned to Anna. "They've got a life of their own," he said. "They're us—yet they've got a life of their own!"

She was looking up at him with an expression of puzzlement and pain, her black eyebrows bent into the middle of her face. "Why do you talk so much?" she said, her voice booming under the bridge.

"Sorry. Fucking sorry." He said it more easily this time.

Her face relaxed. "Oh, stupid," she said. "Come on! Come on, let's go and see these people."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brian always spoke of the place they were visiting as Crown Farm; but, in fact, the Crales lived in a small cottage, all that was left of the old farm buildings.

"Did you really find out anything from them?" said Anna, as they got near to the house. They were going the back way, past a heap of earth and rubble with a boot with a yellow lace sitting on top, and a patch of soil with some brown potato stems scattered on it.

"I got reports from their teachers every week for about six months after their dad came back. And I questioned Mrs. Crale quite regularly. It showed something—it makes a page or so in the book, sort of anecdotal material round the statistics. Those are nearly all other people's. Anyway. I liked coming. I learned something, in my skin, you know."

At that moment the back door of the house flew open, and a girl of about seven came running out, in a long, stained white sweater almost down to her knees. She was followed by a slightly older girl in a pale blue dress, who was holding the hand of a little boy wearing long trousers.

"Mr. Pleasant!" shouted the first girl. "Got anything for us?"

When she got close, Brian picked her up, and she put her arms round him. "I might have a bar of chocolate," he said, "if I find you've been good to your mum."

"I have! I've helped her all the time."

"All right, then." He put her down and felt in his coat pocket. "Say hello to my friend, then. This is Miss Bintry—Anna, that's her first name. Anna, these are Betty, Susan and Perkin. Why's he called Perkin, Susan?"

The older girl stared at Anna. Then she said, in a quick, nervous voice, "Cos his great-grandfather was. My dad's grand-dad, he always liked him when he was a little boy. Got the chocolate?"

Brian took three bars of chocolate from his pocket and gave them to the children. Perkin snatched his, and said, with a big smile, "Thank you, Mr. Pleasant, you're very pleasant."

"Don't!" shouted Betty, slapping his arm.

But he took no notice. "Thanks, Mr. Pleasant, you're very pleasant," he said again, chuckling.

"Oh, he's awful," said Susan.

"We'll put up with him," said Brian. "Is your mother in?"

"Yes," the two girls said together.

"They seem all right now," said Anna.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Perhaps they never minded really! I don't know."

Before they got to the door, Mrs. Crale was standing in it, smiling broadly at them. She was a very small woman, with fair hair zigzagging in all directions from her scalp, and thick pebble glasses.

"Why are the children at home?" muttered Anna.

"Half-term," Brian muttered back. "Of course, you wouldn't know those things."

"Morning, Mr. Pleasant," called Mrs. Crale. "I was saying you'd be along one day soon. Already spoiling the children, I see."

"This is a friend of mine from the Poly, Anna Bintry," said Brian.

"Very pleased to meet you, miss."

"Hallo, Mrs. Crale." Anna smiled at her.

"Come on in, and I'll make you a nice cup of tea." Mrs. Crale tipped her thick glasses in Anna's direction. "On the cooker Mr. Pleasant gave us," she said. "I won't forget that as long as I live. We just had a little oil heater before that, you know, Miss . . . Miss Anna. My husband went mad because of it. Now he gets a good dinner every night, puts his feet up, you wouldn't know him—old rascal he was!" She gave a thin, merry laugh.

The door opened straight on to a sitting-room. It looked drab in the bright sunlight coming through the windows, but it was full of worn armchairs.

"Made it more comfortable, like, you see, Mr. Pleasant."

"Better every time I'm here, Mrs. Crale."

It only took her a minute to bring them tea in white cups. "Any questions this morning?" she asked, as she sat down with them on a wooden chair by the fire, where pieces of fencing were burning briskly.

"I don't think so," said Brian. "We've had enough, haven't we? They seem fine out there."

"Oh, you'd never know, when you think of what they were like a year or two ago. Remember how Susan used to sit there, chewing her old doll? She still takes it to bed with her, mind you, but she leaves it there. She goes off to school in the morning with the little ones as cheerful as a bit of fire."

Brian and Anna only stayed to drink their tea. When they came out of the house, the children ran down the mound to greet them again. Perkin, who had the boot in one hand, threw a ball of silver paper at Brian with the other, then put his hand on his hip and laughed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Thank you for the chocolate," said Susan.

"Bring us a bigger bar next time," said Perkin, in his shrill voice. "My dad brings me big bars."

Brian and Anna could still hear them calling goodbye, as they walked back along the canal.

"So I've met your family," said Anna, after a little while.

"Yes. Yes, you have." He sighed.

"I wish I hadn't—oh, I wish I hadn't."

"Do you?"

Under the arch, Brian noticed that the sun had moved round, and the shadows had gone, but he said nothing. Anna was trailing a long stick in the water, not looking at him.

They turned across the field and, still in silence, got into the car. As they sat down, Brian turned to Anna. There was no hesitation in their movement towards each other. His mouth was wide open on hers, his arms were crossed behind her back, their stomachs were straining to touch. And as they squeezed and kissed each other ever more passionately, Brian saw, out behind Anna's shoulders, across the small fields, such an oncoming history of pain and bitterness—who knew about it better than he?—that he closed his eyes; such an oncoming history, too, of lies and compromises—for he knew also that Anna's bold words of an hour before would mean nothing whatsoever now.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JONATHAN CHAVES

Translations from Yün Shou-p'ing

Yün Shou-p'ing (1633–90) is usually named with Wu Li and the "Four Wang's" (Wang Chien, Wang Shih-min, Wang Hui, Wang Yüan-ch'i) as one of the six "orthodox" masters of early Ch'ing dynasty painting. His calligraphy and poetry are also outstanding and, together with his painting, make up the "Three Perfections of Yün Shou-p'ing." As a poet, Yün stresses the shorter forms, and most of his poems are t'i-hua shih *(poems inscribed on paintings). Within these limitations, Yün shows remarkable inventiveness; with seeming effortlessness, he rings variation after variation on the traditional themes. These are the first translations of his poetry into English.*

GREEN BANANA LEAVES

I sit here long, the lamp burns dim;
sound of rain, swept by the wind past my house.
The tears of the banana leaves, outside the window:
for whom are they falling tonight?

A PAINTING OF CHRYSANTHEMUMS IN THE BONELESS STYLE OF HSÜ CH'UNG-SSU[1]

I face the yellow flowers,
silent, saying nothing.

The yellow flowers face me
as if they had feeling.

[1] *Hsü Ch'ung-ssu:* Hsü Hsi (d. before 975) was a great master of flower painting. The "boneless method" associated with his name consists of defining the forms entirely through the use of colored washes, without enclosing outlines. Yün Shou-p'ing's greatest fame as a painter was achieved through his mastery of this style.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Slender stems, leaf after leaf
touched with frosty breath;

heavy flowers, petal after petal
alive with the clarity of autumn.

WRITTEN ON THE NIGHT OF THE TWENTY-NINTH OF THE FIRST MONTH

Wooden bridge, gaunt willows—
here the thatched hut stands open.

By the stream, the mountain boy announces
that a guest has come.

Together we sit in the cold mist,
among the pines and bamboo,

warm up wine in the snow and gaze
at the plum blossoms in the courtyard.

ON A LANDSCAPE BY MYSELF

In the blue-green shadows
the morning clouds lie smooth.

Wild grasses look like mist,
the gully path is bright.

When can I come here
to build a home in the mountains

and listen forever to the wind in the pines,
the sounds of monkeys and birds?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A PAINTING OF YAMS

I still remember the time at the mountain hut,
going to bed late at night . . .

I called a friend over
and we chanted poems
in the cold lamplight,

then, over a pinewood fire in the brazier
we roasted yams,

and when we stood up to open the window,
saw the snow outside.

ON A PAINTING OF MUSHROOMS

A single rock from Cinnabar Hill
and glittering on it: mushrooms of five colors!
Eat them and you will grow wings.
Swallow them—they are good for your complexion.

ON THE DAY OF THE MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL OF THE YEAR PING-YIN [1686], TOGETHER WITH CHANG HAN-CHAN, CHING-FAN AND CHING-T'IEN, I SAW THE KUEI BLOSSOMS AT THE NORTHERN GARDEN OF JADE PEAK (One poem from a group of ten)

In a hidden spot on the northern mountain,
reached by a wooden bridge,

the mountain spirit quietly keeps watch
over a grove of flowering *kuei*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fearing that the autumn winds may blow the blossoms down,

I will sleep among these flowers tonight,
along with the cranes and gibbons.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS (One poem from a set of two)

As we say farewell to autumn
we think of the flowers

and gather a group of friends
to drink wine
among the chrysanthemums.

On all sides—flaming lamps,
in the center—great torches:

the flowers burn like points of light
on every branch.

ON THE PAINTING, "JOYS OF VILLAGE LIFE"[2]

For a hundred miles, the west wind carries the fragrance
of millet;

the water is low in the cold stream,
the grain is on the threshing-floor.

The old buffalo, done with his task of plowing for today,

chews some grass as he lies in the sunset
on the hill.

[2]A variation by Yün on the poem, *The Millet Is Ripe* by the Sung dynasty poet, K'ung P'ing-chung (obtained degree 1065). See Ch'ien Chung-shu, *Sung-shih hsüan-chu* (Peking, 1958), p 96.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DAVID HUDDLE

Sketching Hannah

Nelson is out of place. His way is downhill, but even that does not excuse the speed of his pace or his odd carriage. He is bent forward, his hands are jammed into the pockets of his open trench coat, and his tie flaps out ahead of him. He seems almost to be butting the air with his head. The wind is chilly this bright November day; skirls of leaves fly in the empty streets and from lawn to lawn of the houses he passes. The lake at the foot of the hill shines now in the afternoon sunlight. If he cared to see the water, he could easily stop, catch his breath, savor a pretty view. But Nelson doesn't even slow down. His eyes function only to tell him whether or not the next ten feet or so of sidewalk are safe to travel. He lets the slope of the hill and the cold wind carry him at a near run.

Hannah won't be home from work, and he knows it's foolish for him to get there so soon and then have to pass the time chatting with her roommates. Worse will be if he is penned up in the kitchen with one or two of the scruffy young men whom the roommates introduce to him as friends and who bemusedly question him about his law practice. He can barely bring himself to say aloud the names of her roommates, Dawn, Michelle, and Heather.

Hannah is a lanky woman, but Nelson thinks she isn't remarkable-looking unless she is studied closely. In April she came to see him about back wages owed her by a former employer named Seaford. In a low voice, choosing her words carefully, she told Nelson that Seaford was a potter, that after dropping out of Mt. Holyoke she had apprenticed herself to him. Seaford owed her about $500 in wages and another $125 she had lent him. Seaford had left town two weeks ago, and neither Hannah nor anyone else knew where he had gone. Hannah was pretty sure he would head for Vancouver. Hannah had stayed at Seaford's shop until the morning a bank officer and various creditors came to haul away Seaford's pots, wheels, bags of clay, shelves, glazing materials, and even his kiln. Hannah told him she'd watched workmen disassemble Seaford's kiln with sledgehammers and then throw the worthless pieces onto the bed of a pick-up truck.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She takes care to dress plainly. That day in his office she sat across from Nelson in hiking boots, bluejeans, an old blue sweater; she wore a blue bandanna to cover most of her straight black hair. Ordinarily Nelson would have heard her out and then explained that he couldn't help her. The amount of money involved was small, the work complicated. But as she talked to him, Nelson saw her becoming more and more lovely. Her forehead was high, and she had wide cheekbones. She didn't appear at all uncomfortable, though Nelson imagined she'd never before sat in a lawyer's office. She was intelligent and a little funny, laughing now and then when she described Seaford's peculiarities to him. She said that one afternoon, back in January when it was bitterly cold and the heat in the shop had broken down, Seaford became convinced his life had gone wrong. Shortly thereafter, the pots had begun to come out of the kiln cracked, pocked, and skewed. She said she missed Seaford. Then she smiled at Nelson and said softly, almost to herself, "I guess you didn't want to know that." Nelson assured her that he was very glad indeed to know it and that he found her frankness refreshing.

Until now Nelson hadn't located Seaford. For his efforts on Hannah's behalf, he had to show only a report of Seaford's having received a speeding ticket in the vicinity of Minot, South Dakota. But today he has news for her, Seaford's address and phone number in Seattle. Nelson's attitude toward Seaford remains entirely dispassionate. He expects he won't get much money for Hannah, but he still plans to pursue the case conscientiously, knows he will hold on to it as long as it holds out any possibility.

Not so long ago, Nelson would have enjoyed looking carefully at the houses he passes; they were built back when this small northern city boomed with money from the lumber business. Nelson would have considered with sympathy the new families living here now, husbands and wives trying in difficult times to raise decent children. But landscapes pain him now; almost anything he sees hurts. He knows if he goes slowly and looks out through the bare, waving branches of the oaks and maples toward the lake, he will be assaulted by the sight. The weather, the season, the hard objects of the world, all seem to him connected to his blood. This cold, windy sunlight projects toward him every shape too harshly, too vividly. He wants to fly toward whatever he sees, and he sees everything with terrific, agonizing clarity. He feels giddy, so alive he can hardly stand it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Why Hannah sees him he isn't sure. "Why wouldn't I want you?" she asks in her wry way. "What's wrong with you?" They have long, complicated talks in which they evaluate themselves and each other. These talks seem dangerous to Nelson, as though one of them could easily say the cruel thing that would kill off what they feel for each other. They name this feeling as care: "I care for you," one of them will say, and the other must merely smile and not return the foolish, "I care for you, too." Walking now, with only a block or two more before he reaches the house, he puzzles over it, the name for what they are to each other. Hannah's body is beautiful and funny to him when he thinks of it not in her presence, her knees of which she is ashamed because of their boniness, her arms so thin and stringy-muscled he is always surprised at how strong she is. His consideration of her body and face is what he holds in his mind most often, the vision he cherishes, what he wants to fly toward now instead of these trees and houses and the stones of the high ledge here at the steepest part of the hill: the clean line of her hair past her forehead, behind her ear, halfway down her neck.

She has no shyness. "You should see how I do this. I'm sorry if you don't want to." That day in September she stood in the dark part of the room, near the bureau, with her back to him. He watched her thin shoulder blades moving as though they were about to become wings. Then she moved into the light, facing him. "So maybe you're a little older. You think that means you won't get me pregnant?" Now it has become ritual. With one foot on the bed and both her arms stretched downward across her breasts, she makes Nelson think of girls Degas painted. If he'd lived another sixty years, Degas would have found Hannah, Nelson is certain of it, and painted her this way, bending forward, awkward, the light on her hip, her foot on the bed turned outward.

Here at her house, the hill is so steep that Nelson's steps ring heavily on the sidewalk. He goes past the small front lawn that contains Hannah's miniature garden, past the walk that would take him to her front door. When he turns into the driveway below the house, he catches one glimpse of the sharp reflection of sunlight on the lake, a clear sweep of airy distance out across the water into vague blue-white nothingness. He doesn't want to see any of it. He goes to the basement door and pushes it open.

Both of them prefer this way of entering the house, coming up from beneath. In the dark silence, out of the wind, Nelson feels better. He doesn't even bother turning on the light switch. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knows the way here, knows even that Hannah's bicycle is standing just inside the door, knows and is comforted by the soft rumble of the furnace on the other side of the crude basement staircase. And when he has climbed the steps, not counting them but knowing anyway when he has taken the last one, and has come through the door into the light of the kitchen, he is immediately certain that he is alone in the house.

The basement door is never locked. A week ago he drove here at four in the morning, dousing the car's headlights just before turning into the driveway. He, Nelson, was a thief, coming up into the kitchen, feeling his way to the staircase to the second floor, walking softly so as not to wake the roommates, opening Hannah's door so slowly and quietly he became almost dizzy with the blackness all around him. He closed the door behind him and stood at the foot of her bed. From the streetlights shining in through her windows, he could see her shape under the covers. He undressed, found the ashtray she kept for him on her desk, lit a cigarette, and sat down on the bed beside her. She spoke to him clearly; he didn't know how long she'd been awake: "I don't like you to come here like this."

"I can leave," he said. She was quiet, and soon he got in bed with her, put the ashtray on his stomach, and finished the cigarette. She let him curl himself against her back, run his hand over her shoulder and arm, her breasts, the sharp bones of her hip, her flank. He wanted to have her then, just to fly into her. And maybe he could have had it that way, but he thought he couldn't, thought she was having a difficult enough time getting used to his having violated her sleep and her bed. So he waited, listening to her breathing, thought it was all right if she went to sleep, he would be there with her when first light came into the room.

After a while she talked, and he knew she'd been thinking, not going to sleep at all. "Seaford came here like this once or twice. I'd wake up with him shoving me around, trying to pry my legs open." She laughed softly about Seaford; it was the way she usually ended whatever she had to say about him.

"I guess I wanted the same thing," Nelson said. "Was he very drunk?"

"No," she said. "He liked tea. Nothing with alcohol." She paused and then went on. "He just didn't care to say much. I never knew where I was with him. The best times we had were when we were both working at the wheels. That was the closest I was to him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When both our wheels were turning and making that soft noise, and the clay was taking whatever shape our hands were giving it, it was like I was living in both our bodies at the same time, same blood and everything. One day I tried to get him to talk with me about it, but he got mad at me and stomped out of the shop. He was gone a long time, and when he came back I wasn't even thinking about what I'd said to him. He came in and yelled at me, 'Listen, it's two pots. Any way you think about it, it's still two pots.' "

"What did you say?" Nelson asked.

"Nothing. I didn't say anything." Hannah sat up and put her feet on the floor. Nelson touched her back with the tips of his fingers, and after a while he felt her shivering. When she went to the bureau in the corner of the room, he could see the narrow strip of whiteness that was her back. He heard her opening the top drawer, and he imagined her hair falling forward around her face.

Nelson is at ease now, no longer in a hurry. He has never been here when the house was empty, when there wasn't music coming from Michelle's elaborate stereo system in the living room. He forgets even to take off his trenchcoat; he is absorbed in the extraordinary silence of the house. He walks slowly through the dining room, the living room, the downstairs bathroom. Then he goes upstairs and into each of the roommates' bedrooms; they are so cluttered and bizarrely decorated, it is difficult for him to distinguish between ornament and debris. He saves Hannah's room for last.

Her bed is made. The curtains are open at the bay window at the head of her bed. He can see the lake outside, and now he pauses a moment to look at it, finds the view pleasing, especially the sloping field of houses that curves down toward the water. Nelson thinks then of the city as having risen up out of the lake, housed and peopled, pleasant, busy, alive. Straight down from the window is the small circle of bricks where in May Hannah set out marigolds, pansies, nasturtiums, zinnias.

At this early hour of the afternoon, the light here from this alcove of windows gives the room a quality of age and fragility. But Nelson knows it changes. Later today, when Hannah comes, the sun will fall directly on them, the trees will wave and move patterns of shadow over the bed. At that hour Nelson has imagined the two of them underwater, the room an aquarium. Occasionally Hannah likes sharing a cigarette with him; she will hold it in her teeth, "like a gun moll," she says, and lie on her stomach, letting the smoke roll

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up over her face. They no longer must remind each other to notice how the light is. Even on rainy days when it is muted and turns the room a soft tint of blue-grey, Nelson is grateful for it. Hannah lies sometimes with her hands behind her head, lifting one leg and then the other, pointing her toes toward the ceiling. Nelson pretends to drowse then, but usually he watches her through slitted eyelids.

He walks back away from the windows. He opens Hannah's closet, takes a blouse out, holds it to his face, puts it back. Then he undresses. He hangs up the trench coat, his suit and shirt; he puts his shoes and socks on the closet floor; on hooks inside the door he hangs his underwear and tie. He shuts the door and pats a light drum cadence with his hands on his belly, then stretches his arms up to the ceiling, stands on tiptoe for a moment. The cool air makes him shiver a little, but the feeling is pleasant to him, exhilarating, and he goes to Hannah's small mirror, standing first this way and then that to try to see as much of himself as he can. His chest and arms and belly are covered with hair the color of tin or ashes. But his muscles still hold enough form to allow Nelson a little pleasure in the sight of his body. He goes to her bed and gets into it. Hannah sometimes complains that the bed is too soft, but now it seems to him to be holding him up gently, as though he were floating on salt water. The covers, the sheets, the pillow are all full of her smell. He curls on his side and gazes at the picture.

The paper has been torn raggedly at the top edge; it is that of an ordinary sketch pad. The lines are sepia, and they appear to have been drawn deftly and quickly. Nelson picked up Hannah late one night after she finished posing for it. Sometimes she models for the students of a drawing class. Seaford suggested it to her as a way of picking up easy money. That night she'd been excited when she got into the car with Nelson. She tried to unroll the picture there for him to see, but there wasn't room enough, and in the dark he couldn't make it out anyway. "They let me keep it," she told him. She explained that she'd never been shy about standing in front of them, but she'd never had the courage to look at the sketches the students made of her. "They each make ten or twelve," she said, "and when they finish one, they throw it on the floor and begin another one. They keep only the best one or two." Hannah had picked this one up off the floor, but the girl who had drawn it was reluctant to let her have it because she thought it wasn't very good. Hannah had persuaded the girl, and when they got back to the house, she and Nelson went upstairs to her room where she showed it to him under the light at her desk. "I thought it was perfect. And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she was going to throw it away," she said. She went downstairs and got Scotch tape. Together they put it up on the wall.

It is a good picture. It leaves out Hannah's face, one of her hands, both of her feet. But the lines that are set down on the paper suggest Hannah so precisely that Nelson marvels at it each time he sees it. "I have more affection for your body than anyone, but I couldn't draw even one line of it," he told her. Once when they lay spent and tangled, he saw her looking away from him, knew she was staring at the picture. When she turned back toward him, he told her, "Sometimes I want, without hurting you, to put my arms into your belly and up under your ribcage so that I can take hold of your heart and hold it in my two hands." She didn't say anything to him, but she held him closer and looked directly at him, her dark eyes intent and luminous.

He uncurls a little, still lying on his side so as to be able to see the picture better. He studies each of the lines. They are all familiar to him, and the bed is warm now. The art student, whose name he doesn't know and whom he has never seen, has rendered the thinness of Hannah's shoulders, the shape and weight of her breasts so that Nelson can very nearly feel her skin in the palms of his hands. One night in August, after he'd cooked dinner for her, they went walking in Lakeside Park. They found a picnic table tucked away in the trees near the water and sat talking in murmurs for a long time. The night was cool after a hot, humid day. There were voices and laughter that came to them from people scattered all over the park, but they felt themselves secluded and invulnerable in the darkness. Hannah turned to look through the trees toward the black and silver water behind them; then she lay back flat out on the table. Nelson wanted to lie beside her, and she made room for him. He was an awkward fumbler, but he managed to unbutton her blouse and nuzzle at her breasts. He tried to see her face; he thought she was smiling and looking up through the dark leaves of the trees. "That place where you live is like a motel room," she said. "It's like somewhere you'd forget the minute you walked out of it and shut the door behind you." Nelson wanted to ask her why she was talking that way, but he couldn't bring himself to say anything and so sat up on the edge of the table again and lit a cigarette. Hannah sat up beside him, not buttoning the blouse. "I was teasing," she said. She scooted closer to him. "If you're going to undress me, the least you could do is keep me warm." He put his arm around her, hugged her to him, but then felt her stiffen.

He saw it too, a small animal coming over the dirt path directly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

toward them. He knew it wasn't a cat or a small dog but was a wild animal, and he started to stand up and shout at the thing. "Be still," Hannah told him, so softly he wasn't even certain she'd said it at all, but the creature had stopped when he'd moved. He saw the white stripe of its tail come up behind it. It faced them in the darkness, and Nelson held himself rigid. After a while the animal seemed to be backing away from them, and then it turned and shuffled back down the dirt path until they couldn't see it any more. Nelson let his breath out. Hannah stood up, buttoned the blouse, tucked it in. He put his mouth to her forehead, holding her shoulders lightly with his hands. But she was changed now, not so much stiff or resisting toward him, but indifferent, concerned with something else. When he asked her what was wrong, she became sharp with him. "Your beige walls, your stupid pictures," she said. "Little boys and girls with huge eyes."

"I don't plan to stay there," he told her. "It's just temporary."

"Are you going to find him?"

He had to think a minute to know what she meant. Then he said, "Yes, I'm going to find him. I write letters almost every day. I've made a lot of telephone calls."

She mumbled something; he understood only the repeated words, "letters, telephone calls." Then she went walking out away from him, into the shadows. "Those children are grotesque," she said. When Nelson remembered that night now, he changed what happened and what they said. He removed all unpleasantness. He made a logic that took them back to the table, naked, graceful, pleased with each other and the trees and the night all around them.

But in the room, in the bed, Nelson is free of yearning. He is aware only of brown lines on white paper. It is a sort of gift he is receiving, a likeness of Hannah that he is able to savor at the very center of what he feels for her. What he feels is something exact and nameless. He wants nothing more. He is suspended. He doesn't even have the memory of wanting.

He hears her footsteps coming down the hill toward the house. It is a quiet street, with cars passing only now and then, but even so, he would not have noticed the steps if they hadn't been hers, if he hadn't known she was coming toward him. He sits up to watch for her through the windows. When he sees her, he wants to call out to her immediately, she should come inside, she isn't dressed warmly enough. She wears not a coat but just a dark green sweater against

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the cold November wind. Her hair blows across her face, and she sweeps at it again and again with her hand, a child's gesture. She wears a denim skirt, and Nelson shivers to himself when he imagines the wind around her legs.

She cuts down into the small yard in front of the house, and Nelson must stand up and look almost straight down from the window to see her. He knows that she is tired, that she has been on her feet almost all day at work, and he is surprised that she goes so directly to the garden, the small circle of bricks that now holds only brown stems and shriveled leaves. She kneels beside it and begins picking out everything, flinging the stuff back onto the bank of thick ivy behind her. She is full of energy, extraordinarily alive. Once she loses her balance and catches herself with one hand against the brown grass, her wrist angled so sharply that Nelson shudders with his knowledge of its fragility. He can't see her face at all, just the top of her head, her hair blowing furiously in the wind. He clasps himself with both hands, and for a moment his face twists into a grimace that would frighten Hannah, were she to look up to the window and see him standing there. But she doesn't, and he goes to the closet for his clothes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAY PARINI

Beginning the World

The crossing from sleep to waking
was easy those early winter mornings
when the snow fell dumb and bright as stars.

My mother packed me to the nose
in scarves; she tied a hat to my head
and sent me stumbling in boots through hills of snow.

The way was a desert of white,
dunes whirling in the street where cars
lay buried, humped and sleeping like camels.

And I loved that whiteness,
the unyielding blankness of it all
that left me alone with the whole world unimagined.

Today, marooned by decades
and distance from those days and winters,
I close my eyes to begin the world again.

Tanya

One day after school
I was running the tracks
back into the country
in early spring, sunlight
glazing the chips of coal,
old bottles and beer cans
shoaling the sides. I ran
for miles, stripped
to the belly, dogwood
odors in the air like song.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When I stopped for breath
I saw there were women
bending in the ferns.
They spoke in Polish,
their scarlet dresses
scraping the ground
as they combed for mushrooms,
plucking from the grass
blond spongy heads
and filling their pouches.

But the youngest one
danced to herself in silence.
She was blond as sunlight
blowing in the pines.
I whispered to her . . . *Tanya*.
She came when the others
moved away, and she gave me
mushrooms, touching my cheek.
I kissed her forehead:
it was damp and burning.

I found myself sprinting
the whole way home
with her bag of mushrooms.
The blue sky rang
like an anvil stung
with birds, as I ran
for a thousand miles to Poland
and further east, to see her
dancing, her red skirt
wheeled in the Slavic sun.

Illimitable Kingdom

There is something about this room
you cannot pretend to say.
I stand by the window

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where a green plane rises over towers.
It is full of silence, lifting
its nose into brilliant spaces.
Taxis throttle in the streets below,
but the room holds still;
the furniture waits at my convenience.

When the telephone rings, I let it
tremble and refuse to answer.
I cannot say why.
Alone in this wordless room,
I am grateful for the life
that will not give in, that keeps
on coming when the words are gone,
this world within world,
illimitable kingdom.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RICHARD BURGIN

From Conversations with Isaac Bashevis Singer

BURGIN: In *The Estate* you describe two death scenes: Clara's death, where she has the experience of leaving her body and Rabbi Jocheban's death. These two people in the way they conduct their lives couldn't have been further apart. I take it this wasn't a coincidence. Was there an attempt to make a kind of parallel or contrast with the two scenes, having them intentionally juxtaposed in the ways they experience death?

SINGER: Of course, just as the lives of these two people were not alike, so their death was not alike. It couldn't have been alike because Clara was a hedonist. She wanted to get all the pleasures of life and she did not succeed. Just the same, when I describe her death I describe it so that the feeling is that she's not lost forever. She's not extinguished as let's say a candle is extinguished. I make the reader feel that even Clara, although she was a sinner and a person who betrayed people and lied and was selfish to a high degree, just the same there is some dignity even in her dying, and the reader is left with the feeling that Clara is not gone forever. There must be some place where Clara's soul is going either to be cleansed or whatever they do with souls. On the other hand, Rabbi Jocheban is really a saint. He was a saint and he dies like a saint. I make him see a light which no human eye, no eye of a healthy human being has ever seen. Whether I try to make this as a parallel, I'm not sure because I wrote about Jocheban's death most probably many months after I wrote about Clara's death. And to make parallels consciously is not really in my nature. But I would say just the same, the results are clear. In both cases, I speak more or less about immortality, but the immortality of a saint and the immortality of a selfish and reckless person are not the same. They have different qualities altogether.

BURGIN: That's a little bit ambiguous, what do you mean by different qualities?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SINGER: I mean the experience of dying is different for both of them. Clara doesn't have that blissful feeling, that unity with God.

BURGIN: Are you hinting that there's an eternal life for both of them?

SINGER: If the reader assumes that what I tell there is true, that she really went out of the body and the Rabbi saw such a light, then of course this means that both go into another world. However, if the reader is not a believer, he could say it was completely subjective. They both had hallucinations or imagined it.

BURGIN: And what did you intend?

SINGER: Well I would say when I write about such things, I always make them ambiguous. Why I make them ambiguous is because since I myself am not sure how things are, why should the reader be?

BURGIN: In terms of life after death?

SINGER: Yes, I'm not sure, although I personally believe in it.

BURGIN: You believe in life after death?

SINGER: I believe in some kind of life after death, but since there is no evidence of it, I don't want to come out and say to the people it is so. I make it so the believer will say here is immortality, while the non-believer will say it's simply the belief in immortality. I've done this in almost all my stories about the supernatural. They can always be explained in either a subjective way or in an objective way. I did this to make it so that I don't really try to say to the reader that he has to take it, like the Bible which tells how Moses split the Red Sea. I don't want to go so far. I leave it so to say to the people with open minds, that they should judge for themselves. This I do intentionally.

BURGIN: Still you close the "Clara section" with the line "She's a fragment of eternity."

SINGER: Of course, about this there is no question whatsoever. We are all fragments of eternity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BURGIN: In what sense?

SINGER: We are a part of the universe and the universe is certainly eternal. Even if you don't believe in miracles, we are still a fragment of eternity.

BURGIN: In *The Family Moskat,* you end with the line "Death is the Messiah. That's the real truth." Do you still feel that way twenty-five years later?

SINGER: I still feel that way, that death is the only redemption. Because all the other redemptions disappoint us, they are promises that are never kept. But the promise which death gives to people is always kept.

BURGIN: This isn't easy to ask you, but I'm curious if you think more about death now than when you were younger?

SINGER: No, I was thinking about death when I was eighteen, seventeen and most probably twelve and thirteen years old. This problem of death was always before me because I saw people dying in our street. The wagon which takes the corpses, the funeral wagons were always there. People who yesterday or the day before yesterday came to the prayer house to pray, two days later were already taken to the cemetery. I saw all this and I was puzzled, I was frightened, I was astonished. So I'm not thinking about death more than I did, because I thought already then about it all the time.

BURGIN: So you still think about it?

SINGER: I still think about it.

BURGIN: Do you try to push it out of your mind?

SINGER: No, I don't push it out of my mind. I think about it.

BURGIN: What are your thoughts?

SINGER: I don't know what my thoughts are. Since there is no scientific proof that there is immortality, that the soul lives, it's all a question of belief. So I would say I know as much about it today as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I knew when I was twelve years old. I know nothing, but I'm puzzled just the same or I'm frightened. I say to myself what is the sense of all this living and all this constructing and building and hoping when by the attack of some microbe, everything a human being has experienced and has gathered together is finished. I would say that all people think about death. The only thing is some people don't have the time really, they cannot afford to think about it. These people have such a great passion about their practical life that they think about it until their very last day. I heard of a man who was very much interested in the stock market. On the last day of his life the stocks went up and he was kind of happy, in fact he died smiling. Well, of course, when a man has such a passion for earthly things, he just doesn't have the time to think about death or it may be this passion for earthly things is a way of pushing away the thoughts about death. Why think about death if you can think about the stocks? Maybe there is wisdom in it, because Spinoza said that a wise man never really ponders death. This is what Spinoza says in his *Ethics*. He thinks about life, not about death. So from this point of view, this man who was thinking about the stock market till the last hour might have been a great sage, also Spinoza. But some people can't push these thoughts away. My feeling is that even the animals in a way have a notion about their death . . .

BURGIN: Only right before the end, though, I think.

SINGER: I've seen them getting old, no, no . . . let's say when a dog gets old he looks at you as if to say I'm not young anymore, I don't have my old powers. He doesn't think in words, but his eyes express it. You can see it in the eyes of a horse or of other animals.

BURGIN: How would you like to live? What are you trying to accomplish in the rest of your life?

SINGER: Well I try to do the things which I have been doing for many years—to write, to continue to write because I'm accustomed to do this. It is my profession. I always feel that I have some more stories to tell. I would also like once to write a book in a way to sum up my thoughts or feelings about life, a non-fiction book. Whether I will succeed in doing it or not I don't know because I've never really written such kinds of books, but I toy with the idea of writing such a book which should be neither philosophy nor psychology, but a kind of a . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BURGIN: Spiritual autobiography.

SINGER: Yes. The way I look at life. I once told you that I consider free choice the greatest gift of humanity and I think that people have not made really a good use of this gift. Sometimes I feel like trying to make good use of free choice, and then if I succeed, to tell people what I did and how I struggled with it. Whether I will succeed or not, whether I will do it or not, I just cannot tell you at this moment.

BURGIN: I hope I'm not being morbid but since we're discussing death and free choice, I wonder what your feelings are about suicide. Do you believe that suicide is *a priori* always wrong, or are there circumstances that would justify it?

SINGER: No, I think suicide is almost always good.

BURGIN: I'm surprised.

SINGER: Not the way a man who commits suicide and kills another person like this Gary Gilmore, I don't approve of such people.

BURGIN: Well, he was mentally ill.

SINGER: A murderer. But a person who decides that life isn't worthwhile living and he tries to give God's gift back . . . I think that such a person has great courage and shows it by his protest against the evils of life, and I think most of the people who commit suicide are people with character and with will power and I admire them. Of course I would not admire a man who jumped down from the fortieth floor when the stocks fell as it happened in 1929 because such a suicide is not a protest . . .

BURGIN: It's not an intellectual decision.

SINGER: It's not an intellectual decision, it's just that yesterday he was worth two million dollars, today he's worth two thousand dollars. I can understand such a man. Of course he's a sufferer, but there is not much to respect. I think that suicide can be the highest way a man can tell to the Almighty I don't agree with the way you are managing the world and because I don't agree, take back your great gift. It's all yours, I don't want it anymore. I almost always

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

respect suicide. Of course a man who kills somebody and then himself, is a murderer.

BURGIN: Would you say that suicide is in a certain sense one of the highest ways of the intellect asserting itself over the will, because it's built into us to live after all?

SINGER: Speaking in Schoepenhauer's terms, yes. It is as if one would say "I've looked over this whole business and I've come to the conclusion that it's nothing but false. My father slept with my mother, and because they wanted this minute of enjoyment, I have to suffer all my life and I don't want it." It is true that many of the religious people consider suicide a great sin and there is even somewhere a saying, I don't remember if it's in the Talmud or not, that a man who commits suicide loses the world to come. But I've also seen in the Talmud cases of people who did commit suicide, and the Talmud calls them holy people and so on, people who were in such a predicament that they had to commit suicide like the mother Hannah who lost her seven children and then she went up to the roof and threw herself down. It seems that the opinion of suicide is not really unanimous by the sages of the Talmud. Some consider it bad; some consider it good.

BURGIN: Doesn't suicide violate the tenets of almost every religion in the world?

SINGER: Yes, but I don't care.

BURGIN: I happen to agree with what you're saying.

SINGER: Of course those who have written the religions hold other views. All religions as far as I can see are man-made, not God-made. Men have them and of course men who themselves had desire for life looked askance on people who give back this gift, but I don't have to agree with all these men.

BURGIN: It's like giving bad reviews of their books.

SINGER: You have said it—it's a good remark. I never have any special respect for authorities. I don't say that, because this man said so I cannot have a different opinion. I would not dare to have a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

different opinion when it comes to chemistry or physics or medicine, about things which I don't know, but when it comes to such things where no one really knows, I may express my opinion.

BURGIN: Do you think, as Dostoyevsky did, that a good deal of wisdom comes through suffering, or is some suffering purely meaningless?

SINGER: I would say a wise man gets wiser by suffering. A person without any wisdom may suffer for a hundred years and die a fool. There are no rules to this, no rules.

BURGIN: In light of what you just said and in light of the fact that we live in a world where everything survives by living off some other being's death, does this make you feel there's something fiendish about the cosmic scheme of things?

SINGER: I wouldn't say this. I would say since I don't have the information, since I don't know God, I don't know His thoughts and I'm sure that if He thinks, His thoughts are infinite times higher than mine, I cannot really criticize Him. I can criticize a writer who writes a novel because I feel that he and I are more or less on the same level and I can see where he reached his goal and where he didn't reach his goal, whether he succeeded in saying what he wanted or not, but I would not dare to criticize God. All I can say is that I don't understand Him. I can see His wisdom; I can see His great knowledge of chemistry, of physics, His technique, His knowledge of life and so on.

BURGIN: That's what constitutes your belief?

SINGER: Yes, but His mercy, I cannot see because the world is a jungle. I believe in God, but this does not mean that I believe in His mercy.

BURGIN: How can you reconcile those two?

SINGER: Yes I can reconcile them because I think a number of philosophers believe that God is not actually merciful . . . Spinoza didn't believe that God was merciful. He said He acts according to His laws. I think that Shestor once said there is a God but He's no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good . . . I would say it may be that God is merciful but since I don't see it, I would never call him merciful. I would call Him a God of wisdom, or power. I really believe that Malthus expressed ideas which are the very essence of reality. I mean he saw the world as it really is and nothing which was said after Malthus can really destroy what he said. I don't have to quote Malthus because I see the same things—that famine and epidemics, deaths and suffering of people keep the world in equilibrium. If all the elephants which were produced would live, and if all the lions and all the lice—the universe would be full of lice and elephants and lions. Death and suffering are a part of creation, and since I don't like to see people struggling against something which is unavoidable, I cannot call God merciful and I feel a great protest in myself against creation. Although there may be an answer, it will never be found on this earth and since I'm still on this earth, I feel a great protest. I think I told you that if I would ever try to create a religion, let's say for myself, I would call it a religion of protest. I would not praise God; I would not call Him a God of mercy, I would call Him a wise God but not a good God and my kind of religion would be a protest against this malice which we see in nature, like letting, let's say, six million Jews be killed by a bunch of maniacs. I also see that man is merciless although he himself suffers and dies and is afraid of cancer and heart attacks and all kinds of things. The moment he gets a little power, other people's sufferings and other people's misfortunes are nothing to him. So since I don't see God's mercy and I see man's mercilessness and man's cruelty, I'm far from being an optimist. I once wrote to myself, a kind of summing up of what I see about the world. Since I wrote it in Yiddish, I can only give you a very bad translation of it because I never translated it. It begins more or less with a saying like this: Both the wolf and the sheep are dying in misery but no one seems to care about what happens to them. Wait, I continue to say, God Himself, the Lord, has created the world so, where the principle of violence and murder is supreme. All I can do in such a world is not really live but smuggle myself through it, sneak by this kind of jungle, hide with my piece of bread before the beasts and murderers catch me.

BURGIN: Why "believe" in a God who isn't merciful and doesn't care about man?

SINGER: I will tell you why I believe. I believe that this power is not blind because if you don't believe in God, you still believe that there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is nature. The wolf and the sheep are still there and magnetic waves are still there and the atoms and everything else. The truth is that whether you say nature or God, it really doesn't make any difference except that I believe that nature sees. I don't believe that nature is blind. So a nature which sees, which understands, is God.

BURGIN: But if the nature sees things without mercy, without pity for man, why should you as a man not revolt against this, why should you support this God?

SINGER: Oh, I don't support it . . . the opposite. I say that I'm protesting against this. My relation with God is a relation of protest, of revolt. I cannot really revolt because to revolt you have to have some power. You cannot revolt without power, but I do protest against this power. While Spinoza said we have to make peace with nature, you have to love God and nature intellectually, I don't say so. I say He's great, He's full of wisdom.

BURGIN: What wisdom, what wisdom if He causes all this suffering?

SINGER: Well, wisdom to build . . . To make a flower you have to have wisdom. Even though this flower is two hours later eaten up by an ox, but the very fact that it is there shows the wisdom in creating it.

BURGIN: There's wisdom in composing the theory of relativity, so what. There's wisdom in Mozart and Beethoven, maybe more beautiful than a flower.

SINGER: Oh, no, no, no. Far from it. All the professors in the world and all the chemists and all the physicists could not create a single flower.

BURGIN: But God's music is not as beautiful as man's, the music of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven is more beautiful than the wind and the sea.

SINGER: First of all, God created Bach and Beethoven. They are also a part of what God created. So it's all God to me because I am a panthesist. To me God and nature are the same except that I believe this power which I call God is conscious, not that it's all blind because when we say nature we mean blind nature, a nature

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which doesn't know what it is doing. I don't believe in this. I say that nature has consciousness; it knows what it's doing and if we would know it well, we could really maybe say it's doing the right thing, but since we don't know, we have to protest. I will tell you . . . this protest which I express does not say that God is bad. I only say He is bad as far as I can see. Because to know what God really is I would have to *know* God, I would have to know all the stars and all the planets, to know the whole universe, to judge . . . I would not write a review about a book which has a trillion pages after I've read only two lines. I could say one thing: these two lines which I read, I don't like. My being a vegetarian is completely connected with this protest. The man who eats meat, the hunter agrees with the cruelties of nature, maintains with every bite (of meat or fish) that might is right. Vegetarianism is my religion, my protest.

BURGIN: I see what you mean. Here you're comparing the universe to an infinite book.

SINGER: An infinite book of which I've read two lines. These two lines seem to me clumsy, without any grammar, and they don't make sense. All I can say is, the little I read I don't like. It may be well-written but it looks to me cruel, but because I didn't read the book, God's book, I don't dare to criticize it. He seems to be a great writer but a very cruel writer and maybe He's not even cruel. If I would know the whole book, I may even say that it's wonderful, but since I don't know and I have no hope of knowing it, at least in this stage I would not praise it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DOUGLASS PARKER

Ars Poetica I: Beginning

for Lili
dec 76/jan 77

If all else fails, sit down at the typewriter, so.
Insert a sheet of paper. Setting at double
or even triple space,
("*Then why don't you*?")
and pick out a title. Or, better, have the title
before you insert the paper. Type it in caps.
Then, pick out a word.
("*What sort of word*?")
Oh, any.
For instance, from where I sit I can see a box
that's loaded with whatnots and drawer-lint. Printed
on the side toward me is a logo: a stylized letter
"A" (or, better, "a"; lower case) afloat
above the trade name AMPAD (that's in small caps,
of course; an acronym, yes, I suppose. However.).

AMPAD, that's our word.
("*But what does that mean*?")
I haven't the slightest idea, and that's what makes it
potentially oh so fruitful for this new poem,
i.e., e.g., cp., v., viz. and to wit:

> AMPAD, the Buddhist adept, lay splayed at the eight-way
> junction of virtue's paths. He hadn't been harmed,
> oh, no, back there in Darjeeling, nor had sly robbers
> lifted his purse and pegged him fast at the center of
> destiny's roundhouse. A whistle shrilled. . .

("*And then*?")
Well, then it doesn't matter; you're off on a start.
("But what about AMPAD? *Won't he get hurt*?")

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now, look:
AMPAD is merely a word, a sayable collocation
of a couple of A's, an M, a P, and a D
It means whatever you want it to mean. Itself,
it's neutral. Or neuter. Regardless, it's open to you
to fill. But keep in mind that it sounds a wee bit
foreign. East Indian, say, like above. Or maybe
Russian:

Clutching the ikon, McChesney flattened his
body against the Kremlin wall. He had
a minute of safety, or maybe three, and then
the Intourist guide would blow her *wheenick,* or whistle,
and bring in brigades of the monomaniacal minions
of AMPAD, the Secret Police, with their dreaded *groynskis,*
or truncheons. McChesney's spleen gave a wince in recall
of his last encounter with AMPAD:
Like soulless robots,
they'd tied him down to a *bokar,* or coffee table,
and given their *groynskis* free rein, till he'd spill the name
of their one double agent. Triploff. Oh, he hadn't broken—
what with the cigarette burning a hole in the *karpyet',*
or throw-rug, the blessed ding-dong of the Avon lady,
and the sudden Tupperware party with the canisters full
of nerve gas, Triploff had gotten him out—but his spleen was
a spinney of fibrillating cells and gristle. He'd had
to go South for a month of R & R at . . .

CAMP AMPAD!
Nestled Deep In The Vales Of Vermont, The Place
For YOUR Autistic Son Or Daughter! Riding,
Fishing, Swimming, Communal Eating Will Make
Them Ready For AMPAD's Patented Sufi-Approved,
Meditative Way To Mental Integration:
PADMA!
A Trifling Ninety-Five Days In The Lotus Position,
And Lo! Your Daughter Or Son Will Suddenly Turn
To A Pillar(Potential, Of Course)Of The Town In Which
You Live, To The God To Whom You Pray . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Great AMPAD!
Forgive me, Celestial Uncle, for I have swerved
from the eightfold path to fiveness. And now I permit,
so great is my spiritual sloth, an unbeliever
to lie stretched out at the navel of all creation.
But not for long, O AMPAD! Slough my sloth,
and bless this *dacousee,* or sacred sickle, and see
Your servant slice to *smitcheees,* or bits, that wretched
goat of an unbeliever who lies at the center of . . .

"AMPAD!
Last stop before Azusa!"
The trainman's howl
jerked me into awareness. Alone in the vastness
of Riverside County, I, Sweet Sal Semolina,
was destined to bring all knowledge, morals, and soap
to a coarsegrained corps of lawless louts, the Men
of Orange, who wrested their Navels (Valencias, too)
from Nature's stony grip, and knew no god.
I gripped my wicker suitcase the tighter, checked
on the year-size bottle of MA DAP's Miracle Extract
For Any And All Female Complaints, and decided
there wasn't time for a sustaining swig before
the train glided in to the depot, perched on a high-piled
mountain of peels. My palms were clammy and DAMP, A
tricklet of perspiration went coursing down
to the small of my back, as I thought of the coming
meeting with AMPAD's crazy patriarch, MAD PA Triplesec.
What could a poor girl do against such . . .

AMPAD!
The Napkin That Never Lets You Know It's There!
Trust This Recent Test By Unfrocked Nuns:
Of Fifty AMPAD-Wearers, A Full Forty-Four
Had Completely Forgotten They Had the DAM PAd On!
Do You See What That Means For You, When . . .

AMPAD DROPS!
(AP) MADddened investors stormed the Exchange

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

today, as AMPAD stock, in the wake of the news
that the giant conglomerate's prexy had skipped
to Brazil or Texas with eleven billion dollars
and the whole damned typing pool, fell through the floor.
But all "sell" orders were fruitless; nobody
was buying. At closing today, the Exchange's head,
grizzle-chinned, Welsh-born Dafydd AP MAD, could not
be reached for comment, other than a strangled . . .

"AMPAD!"

And stout Kerygma mounted the knoll, to gaze
wild-eyed on an unspoiled, virgin continent. Lucky
he'd brought the billboards along in the ship. New planets,
even this lovely M'PAAD, could only add to
his record for sales in August. Especially with
the loquacious mobile plants that ruled the place:
What a market for vegetable peelers! Discreet, oh, yes:
Plain wrapper, and all that scam. A regular . . .

AMPAD

coursed through the jungle, joyful to feel
the smoothly slithering muscles beneath his glistening
hide. But he'd better hurry. The first interview
with the *Rudyard,* whatever that was, was set for six.
Along the way, he spotted a spectacled, moustached
English, and stopped for a snack. Delicious. Then back
to the path. He was there in plenty of time, but the *Rudyard,*
whatever that was, well, the *Rudyard* never showed up.
Disappointed, the great black panther trotted back
to the jungle's depths,
counterpoint his loping
with screams of

AMPAD!

See? It almost writes itself. Next time,
we'll turn our attention to how to handle that little
problem of *meaning.*

Or, as the natives say,

AMPAD.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GEORGE HITCHCOCK

Going Back There

I said goodbye to the clock's brass teeth
goodbye to the clown cap of columbine

pressed between *sec* and *sembler*
in the foxed Larousse someone

has left a sigh in the room
now the window won't open

I came up here wearing sleeves of mist
I wanted to hear the bees roar again

in the eaves to look for the missing
star in the bare twigs of the buckeye

the winter sun is pale a soft lace
of fennel sprouts from the wet earth

the wound is gone I've thrown
away even its reflection

someone's sigh rustles the curtains
then falls like a gull's shadow

mottling the intricate sea of the rug

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What is the future of "the Faith"?

Commonweal **has asked nine leading writer-theologians: What are the most important, most debated theological issues facing the Church today?**

theological frontiers commonweal papers: 6

PHILIP J. SCHARPER / **POLITICIZED CHRISTIANITY**
FRANCIS X. MURPHY / **SEXUAL MORALITY**
JOHN SHEA / **AUTOBIOGRAPHY**
DONALD SENIOR / **JESUS**
ROSEMARY R. RUETHER / **GOD TALK**
MONIKA HELLWIG / **SACRAMENTS AND WORSHIP**
JAMES GUSTAFSON / **TECHNOLOGY AND THE LIFE SCIENCES**
DAVID S. TOOLAN / **RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THE VOWS**
SALLIE McFAGUE TeSELLE / **LITERATURE**

"For the last five decades Commonweal *has won nationwide recognition as an independent journal devoted to the common good. Its contribution to constructive discussion of public issues is clearly more essential than ever today for the advance of religion and the functioning of our democracy. . . ."* Eugene J. McCarthy

SEND FOR A HALF-PRICE TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION

5 Months (11 issues) for $4

---------- **For New Subscribers Only** ----------

COMMONWEAL, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N. Y. 10016.

Please send 11 issues of *Commonweal* including Commonweal Papers 6 to:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHARLES W. MILLARD

The Later Monet[1]

PAINTERS OF THE IMPRESSIONIST GENERATION found themselves increasingly preoccupied with reconciling their representational art with the purely pictorial demands of the surfaces upon which they painted and the nature of the materials applied to those surfaces. They were more and more concerned, that is, with creating a viable decorative art. Hence the admiration of many of them for the painting of Puvis de Chavannes, a painting qualitatively inferior to much of their own despite its decorative impressiveness. Having gathered in Paris to learn from Manet and each other during the late 1860s and 1870s, these painters found themselves, during the 1880s, following independent paths at some remove from one another. Cézanne, whose accommodation of three dimensional subject matter and two dimensional pictorial effect was the most rigorous and rapidly achieved, returned to Aix. Renoir, at the opposite end of the scale, eventually also found his way to the south. Degas chose to continue his explorations of the human figure in Paris, although he was more and more reclusive as he all but gave up painting to concentrate on pastel and sculpture, a medium in which modernist expression was even more difficult to achieve than in painting. And in 1883 Monet moved to Giverny, on a branch of the Seine northwest of Paris, there to focus exclusively on what must be described as nature painting rather than landscape in its usual sense.

Many of Monet's pictorial preoccupations at Giverny had already declared themselves by the 1860s. Of the ambitious *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1865–66), which seemed so much a failure to its creator that he cut it up, Kermit Champa has noted that, "The boldly simplifying tendencies of Monet's art, when enlarged to this scale, could not be forced to render a consistent third dimension without sacrificing luminosity and color intensity." Monet's tendency to heighten the values of his colors, including those of his backgrounds and shadows, not only worked to flatten his figures but placed them under tremendous scale pressures, difficulties that he eventually circumvented by giving up figure painting altogether. Further flattening devices explored by Monet at this time were backlighting, which suppressed continuous tonal transition in favor of a few large tonal areas, throwing shadow patterns forward in the picture, and oblique views, particularly those downward as in the *Terrace at Le Havre* (1866) and *The Princess Garden, Louvre*. Such flattening devices tended to remove the burden of pictorial structure from the scene represented within the picture, and from continuous and connective internal transitions, placing it on visible brushwork and variations of hue and value. Monet's success in

[1] These reflections are based on the exhibition "Monet's Years at Giverny," held at The Metropolitan Museum. I am indebted to Charles Moffett of that institution for his assistance in making the works in the exhibition available to me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

handling broken brushwork and a complex hue and value structure is demonstrated in *La Grenouillère* of 1869, with its discrete touches of light and dark pigment dispersed relatively evenly throughout the foreground, and the rich combination of brick red and grayed green, an *hommage à Manet*, in the roof of the restaurant. One also senses in this painting the suitability of water to Monet's pictorial purposes. Ruffled, it offers the pattern of light and dark exploited in *La Grenouillère*. Calm, it combines surface and depth in a manner that was to become vital to the mature Monet. To quote Champa again, it "provides optical distinctions which receive no plastic reinforcement. Volume is virtually negated." Finally, it can suggest recession without the restrictions of perspective diminution, a capacity of great use to Monet, who never sought to eliminate represented depth but only to accommodate it to pictorial surface. That accommodation was to cause Monet trouble in pictures in which assertive foregrounds were seen against atmospheric backgrounds. Although no such difficulty arises in *La Grenouillère*, one can see its potential in the continuously modulated light-valued background, save in this case by broad facture, by the minor place it occupies in the total composition, and by the regular penetration of elements from the foreground up into it.

During Monet's first fifteen years at Giverny he seems to have been struggling to bring a convincing large-scale synthesis out of the problems with which he had wrestled in his early work. A great variety of work issued from his brush, some of it successful, much not, attacking separately or in concert matters of touch, scale, hue and value relationships, and surface and depth. *The Church at Vernon* of 1883 represents the kind of picture in which many such issues are confronted but nothing, represented or representing, dominates. Like *La Grenouillère, The Church at Vernon* opposes a light-valued upper zone, in this case a smoothly-applied and slightly inflected blue sky punctuated with white clouds, to a more aggressive lower zone, here, as in *La Grenouillère*, representing broken reflections in a river. Unlike the two zones of the earlier picture, however, those of the 1883 canvas are baldly separated by a horizontal extent of riverbank, trees, and buildings. The almost equal tripartite division is slightly ameliorated by the reflection of the central zone in the lower, an enrichment that is, however, unable to overcome the unwillingness of any element of the picture to assert itself, an unwillingness emphasized by the narrow range of value and hue. By contrast, the two versions of the same composition known variously as *Autumn on the Seine* and *Banks of the Seine at Jeufosse, Autumn* (both 1884) attempt a larger scale and more aggressive facture, but without real success. The river in the center foreground of each composition unites with the hills and sky of the top background by being worked out largely in close-valued blue and violet tending to white, the effect being atmospheric in both cases. The trees on the left bank, on the other hand, are more broadly brushed in the red-orange shades of fall foliage, and the fields at the right are rendered in vigorous contrasts of green running to both yellow and black. Although the composition is more subtle than that of the 1883 picture and the trees at the left, together with their reflection, create a strong hemispherical anchor on the surface of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

canvas, there is an unsubtlety about the color relationships and a lack of overall strength and pictorial coherence that undermines these works.

Although indecisiveness and a seldom resolved search to harmonize the many pictorial elements with which he was working characterize much of Monet's work of the 1880s, undermining its quality and making it for the most part visually weaker than his earlier work, there are occasional prophetic pictures of great beauty or striking effect. *Poppy Field in a Hollow near Giverny*, for example, clearly demonstrates the interplay between two and three dimensions that so dominates Monet's work. Its strongly receding foreground field of red poppies leads up to a bowl-shaped depression in the middle distance and both, taken together, read as a flat chalice-shape composed on the surface of the canvas. This reading of the picture is accentuated by the deep-valued green, going to black, in the bushes of the bowl of the "chalice," the darkest tones in the picture and a necessary counterbalance to the strength of the brilliant red foreground. The remaining areas of the canvas are clearly distinguished from the "chalice," the sides executed in regular vertical strokes, as opposed to the more tachiste application of the poppies and the irregular touches that make up the depression, and the small area of sky at the top is carried out in a wholly unrelated hue. The high horizon further compresses the space and by suppressing the only part of the composition that Monet could have made atmospheric helps unify this surprising picture. Even more startling is *The Boat* of about 1887, a picture one is hard pressed not to date some thirty years later. Large in size and scale, *The Boat* represents a rowboat placed diagonally in the upper right quarter of the composition and seen in an extremely shallow pictorial space between the leaves of a branch hanging down from the top of the canvas at that point and the grass-darkened surface of the water on which it floats. There are only two large tonal areas, the leaves and water being executed in a very dark green inflected with yellow, red, and purple that reads as black and the boat being rendered in a light purplish-gray with accents of brownish purple and of a middle value green. The simplicity of the composition, seen in a sharp downward view entirely without horizon or shoreline, throws almost the entire pictorial burden on the contrast between the two tonal areas, on the dark coloristic richness of the water, and on the sinuous breadth of the brushwork. A startling and successful picture in every way, *The Boat* announces with striking clarity Monet's large-scale decorative intentions and his desire to achieve those intentions without sacrificing coloristic richness and the structural control offered by broad brushwork. The preference for dark values of blue, green, and purple is also prophetic.

More usual for this period, and more indicative of Monet's struggles, is *A Bend in the River Epte, near Giverny* (1888). In this picture, a row of trees recedes diagonally from the left foreground to the right middleground forming a screen that suppresses the background altogether, while a tree at the right edge provides a repoussoir against which the receding row is played off. Except for a small area of sky at the top right, atmosphere is altogether denied, and the high-valued flecks of paint that represent leaves cover the canvas with an all-over pattern constituting its greatest strength.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The reflection of the trees in the water of the foreground continues that pattern in diluted form. Although there are a few concentrated areas of dark value in the bushes between the trees and the bank, dark accents are for the most part scattered among the light pattern of leaves, accentuating the evenness of effect created by the uniform brushwork. In sum, this picture represents an important step toward the poplars of some three years later which were, in turn, the immediate prelude to the flowering of Monet's late decorative style.

In 1890–91 Monet worked in series, using haystacks as his subjects and capturing them at different times of day to produce different color effects. Almost invariably, these canvases revived the backlighting he had formerly used so extensively, silhouetting the haystack shapes to make them read as flat against the background of sky and landscape, and permitting their shadows to be used as additional flat coloristic elements. Even though Monet further unified his technique by increased scumbling and dry brushing and by the occasional use of matte surfaces, the object quality of the stacks standing out against their backgrounds worked against unification of these compositions. This was especially true of the pictures with the most unified grounds, such as *Haystacks in the Snow*, in which the strength of the grounds shrivels the stacks. The consequent weakness of individual pictures suggests that Monet was right to insist on the serial character of this group, since the pictures support one another when they are seen together. Outstanding from the series is *Haystack at Sunset*, in which a flaming red stack is seen against a high-keyed sunset effect uniting sky and landscape and readable rather as an infinitely modulated color field than as a naturalistic ground. The Fauve character of this painting, which prefigures similar effects in the Japanese footbridge pictures, results from the anti-atmospheric intensity of its hues. That intensity is also partly responsible for the pictorial success of the composition, a success considerably abetted by the large scale of the haystack, which occupies almost one-half of the right side of the picture and runs out of the composition at its right edge. The character of the broad brushwork is kept consistent throughout and emphasizes the aggressively anti-recessive nature of the picture. In his haystack pictures, Monet first moved consistently away from views—that is, from traditional landscape—and toward what is best described as nature painting, using his natural subjects as occasions to project rich color harmonies. Similarly, he moved away from represented light and from objects defined by light toward the transformation of light into color and the substitution of variations in hue and value for represented light and shadow.

In Monet's next important series, of poplars, one first senses the mature realization of the ends toward which his painting had been moving. The compositions of these pictures are vastly strengthened over those of the haystacks by their subjects—the narrow verticals of the popular trunks, inevitably run off the top edge of the canvas, supplying an armature which draws those compositions up to the surface of the canvas. This surface emphasis and the extension of the governing grid beyond the limits of the canvas, as well as the slender rectilinearity of the grid itself and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

relative insignificance of the represented trees as objects, enhances the decorative quality of these pictures. Although some among them juxtapose a dark row of trees against a brightly lit background, most are worked out in an even value structure, color and value accents being distributed regularly throughout. Monet continued to experiment with these effects in the Rouen Cathedral series of 1893, in which an actual surface—that of the cathedral—supplied him with a pictorial excuse to emphasize the surface of the canvas. When the sky is seen in these pictures, its blue is raised to such intensity as to negate its atmospheric character and make it an equal and competing partner with the facade of the building seen against it. Throughout these years, Monet moved toward increasing clarity and contrast, intensifying his hues, simplifying his compositions, and making individual brushstrokes ever more discrete and of more structural importance. In the middle of these developments, however, as if the artist were challenging himself, there appears a group of pictures, the "Mornings on the Seine," that depend on precisely the opposite effects. The most successful of these, *Morning on the Seine, Giverny*, is a Whistlerian harmony of the palest and most neutral tones, executed in a smooth manner that leaves almost no trace of the brush. Atmospheric in the extreme, it demonstrates how thoroughly the finest artists can confound the expectations made of them, even by themselves.

By the turn-of-the-century Monet had thoroughly absorbed the lessons of the poplar and Rouen series and let himself go in a series of representations of the Japanese footbridge in his garden. While the effects and degree of daring in the Japanese footbridge pictures vary from painting to painting, each is characterized by intense color, obvious facture, and shallow represented space. Such recession as there is is inhibited by the screen of trees that forms the background, frequently represented in intense tonalities, and by the inversion, in several of the pictures, of the normal tonal relationship for landscape, with the light tones brought to the foreground and the darker tones developed toward the back. The natural elements in these compositions—lily-strewn foreground leading up to tree-screened background—are securely stapled to the picture plane by the bridge itself, arching across the canvas at slightly above mid-level and inevitably disappearing off at least one of its sides. The great majority of these canvases are square, their dimensions reinforcing their all-over effect. Strength and contrast are provided not only by the brushwork and color intensity, but by the considerable value contrast Monet weaves throughout the compositions. The visual density of many of the Japanese footbridge pictures is raised to almost excruciating pitch in the burning views of the artist's garden path executed in the first years of the twentieth century. In these works one senses the urgent need for greater size as the increased scale embodied in the broad brushwork and intense color overwhelms the still easel-sized pictures. Monet himself surely realized this, and the concomitant qualitative inhibition, since in at least one of the paintings, dating from 1902, he left the top right corner unpainted, providing momentary and localized relief. These pictures are most impressive for their coloristic complexity. Seen close up, they juxtapose an apparently

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

infinite number of high-pitched hues, and one wonders how Monet could have created a few square inches of such richness, let alone controlling canvases a yard or more square. Such a close view also emphasizes his mastery of coloristic effects that the Fauves and, especially, Bonnard, were to exploit, effects resulting from the immediate juxtaposition of several related hues—shades of purple, blue, and crimson, for example—at high intensity. These are sometimes shot through with complementary hues such as orange or yellow to give them extra life.

The waterlilies with which Monet's late painting is so much identified first appeared as a subject around 1903, and were explored in canvases of easel size for something like five years. The early waterlilies are a throwback to lighter and closer valued, more carefully brushed and more atmospheric effects, and suffer qualitatively for that reason. They did, however, provide momentary relief from the aggressiveness of the footbridge and garden path pictures, pulling Monet back from the brink of abstraction. By focusing on the surface of the pond, they reintroduced a gentle recession from bottom to top, as well as exploiting a subject which, like a mirror, was simultaneously flat and profound. Finally, the floating clusters of lilies provided sharp accents across the surface of the picture, holding it together structurally and allowing for brighter hues as accents. The best of these pictures are, expectedly, those with the highest keyed color and the fewest pictorial elements.

By 1922 the brilliance of the Japanese footbridge pictures had returned, raised, incredible as it seems, to even higher pitch in paintings of Monet's garden path, of the house in which he lived, and of the footbridge itself. The naturalistic forms suggested by the titles of these pictures, however, are all but invisible, their true subject being color. The best of them are the least atmospheric, the most brilliant in hue, and those in which the value accents are most dispersed. Their brushwork is broader than that of any previous painting in Monet's oeuvre, thick and apparently uncontrolled—in actuality, of course, tightly controlled—suggesting that the pictures were created in a sort of frenzy. Not infrequently they project an impression of chromatic harmony—seeming to be studies in blue, red, etc.—when in fact each is characterized by extreme chromatic diversity, with a broad range of hues supporting whichever color is visually dominant.

At the same time these pictures were executed, Monet had begun to work on a larger scale, giving his decorative vision full scope. These final masterpieces, produced until his death in 1926, focus on relatively restricted areas of his garden and its flowers or, in the case of the enormous waterlily decorations, on expanses of the surface of his pond. The views are sharply downward, eliminating the possibility of a horizon, the touch magnified to suit the scale, and the color harmonies even richer than before, tending most frequently to blue and purple. The compositions become all surface, with extensive dry brushing and scumbling. In one of the most impressive of them, a waterlily in a slightly vertical format, one looks through the hanging branches of a weeping willow, the trunk and limbs of which are invisible, as through a curtain to the purple expanse of water on which float a few pinkish lilies. Green accents of lily pads and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bank of the pond enrich the color scheme, and small unpainted areas throughout allow the entire composition to breathe. There is no question of space or atmosphere, but only of overlapping, translucent veils of color the strength and beauty of which make the exact location of any represented element, or the spatial relationships of those elements one to the other, irrelevant. The tendency to weightlessness and disembodiment in the late pictures is accentuated by the use of hanging (willow branches) and floating (lily pads) elements and the complete absence of any composition, such as conventional landscape, that might be construed as being built up. In the multi-canvas waterlily decorations, there is frequently a diagonal compositional tendency that similarly suppresses usual landscape conventions. These triptychs and polyptychs are the culmination of everything toward which Monet had been working, immersing the viewer in a bath of color that is infinitely and subtly inflected across vast surfaces. In them Monet manages to reintroduce a suggestion of atmosphere while keeping his surfaces absolutely taut. His was a constant struggle to achieve decorative effect without sacrificing painterly touch or coloristic variety, and his ability to bring out of these apparently conflicting demands a large-scale art of supreme quality is a measure both of his talent and of his genius. Like Degas, Cézanne, and other masters of his generation, he brought art to the threshold of the most advanced twentieth-century ideas without sacrificing a vision formed in the middle of the nineteenth century by the glories of Manet's painting and of nature.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Panov: The Making of a Myth

IT ISN'T THAT VALERY AND GALINA PANOV AREN'T GOOD ENTERTAINERS. The very vulgarity of their success crystallizes the dilemma in which dance now finds itself. Dance has two distinct audiences, and the possibility that the larger, less intensely dance-oriented audience might slowly convert itself into a more discriminating one has never seemed dimmer to me.

There has always been a drop-in audience for ballet; its lure is tremendous. Its ability to satisfy the appetite for color, thrills, romance makes it appealing to those who don't recognize or appreciate its particular language and tradition. But today's ballet stars are loved for their athleticism and sex appeal, and for how often they show up in the gossip columns. Their dancing may not be what their fans see at all. Out of all the newcomers' names that get singled out by critics and balletomanes, only a few ultimately have that special magnetism that surrounds a star. Often the ones who make it are those who are willing to go outside the dance world and be seen, where the new dance public can find them, in movies, discotheques, talk shows and civic life. A foreign cachet seems to add to a star's attractiveness.

The Panovs are a prime product of all the systems by which reputations get built out of very thin air. For those who don't remember the sequence in the making of their legend, Valery Panov has written his autobiography, *To Dance*, with George Feifer,[1] and it stands as an amazing document of ambition, opportunism, determination and ruthless ego. Panov is ingenuously frank about disclosing these aspects of his personality, perhaps because he considers them laudable, or perhaps he counts on their being acceptable in any quantity if you are a political hero. Seldom has a dancer's motivation come across so boldly in his own words, and seldom does a verbal presentation come so close to the persona we observe on the stage.

Actually, though the book hammers in the story of the Panovs' persecution by Soviet authorities, Valery didn't become a political cause until he'd worn through the patience of the government and the ballet establishment with his complaints, insubordination and attempts to circumvent the setup he couldn't fit into. Only after being kept home from tours and denied other privileges he wanted did he embrace Judaism and start boring his way out of the situation that was so oppressive to him. Panov had been an atheist who changed his name at the age of twenty to rid himself of any identification with his father's Jewish blood; he'd learned in school to think of his heritage as "a shameful, weakening virus," and he knew that his hated name, Shulman, "had the wrong ring for an important theater." He says he changed his mind when, at the time of the Six-Day War in Israel, he saw that "Jews were defending themselves instead of cowering, [and] I recognized my relationship to the beatings they had suffered so long." Typical that he identifies with the physical gutsiness

[1] TO DANCE by *Valery Panov* with *George Feifer*. Alfred A. Knopf. $15.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the beatings, that he ignores his own years of cowering behind an assumed name, and that he gets this revelation precisely at the time when he's been discovered and is being touted by the most powerful critic in America.

The authorities' subsequent cruelty to Panov was certainly real. They limited his freedom to accept work outside his home company, the Kirov Ballet, and finally denied him work altogether, firing him from the company and virtually confining him to his apartment. But this was a long, escalating response to severe provocation. Panov had been a malcontent and a troublemaker from his earliest days at school. In the end, his ostracism may have been the government's only possible act of political resistance to an international campaign of pressure to force the Panovs' release. I often thought, in those months of petitions and loud cries of Free the Panovs, that if only people had let the noise die down, the Russians might have let the couple slip away quietly. But every new protest brought new restrictions.

Panov tells all this with great dramatizing and bitterness. Emigration to Israel became a possibility very late in his long attempt to get out from under the Russian thumb. He sees himself as a Biblical exile, struggling to reach the Holy Land—but only after he's failed to make it to New York, Paris, Turkey. He always plays a tragic hero, not only tormented by the bureaucracy and the political machinery, but victimized and misunderstood by parents, teachers and colleagues. He badmouths and left-handedly compliments nearly every person who contributed to his career, saying of his friend Yuri Soloviev for instance, " . . . he never tried to feign any interest in art," and picturing his mother, whom he adored, as a vain and dissatisfied woman who encouraged his dancing "because I enhanced her own effect. . . . I'd become decorative. I sensed that she'd sought out ballet as much for her unused energy as to involve me in something constructive."

Out of what must have been a deep sense of inferiority, Panov points out the physical defects of even his close associates, especially the women (Alla Sizova, for instance, as a child was "an anemic-looking complainer with red eyes and a voice that nagged whenever she stopped crying"), and meanly attributes other dancers' artistry to their beauty or physiques, assets over which they'd had no control—implying of course that Panov's less than ideal looks and physique weren't his fault either. (Baryshnikov he calls "the most naturally gifted dancer I had ever seen," after commenting on his "weak arms and chest.") He always finds a way to drop in unflattering references—one teacher's lack of turnout, a friend's drinking problem. The world around Panov consists of more or less favored individuals in varying conditions of opposition to Panov; but only Panov is a true artist, dances with true feeling, and has so many disadvantages to overcome.

This ungenerous and self-pitying nature finds its target most often in women. He sees them as "inspirers and sources of strength. Nothing was more creative than their work of bearing and rearing the family." In the confessional tone that dresses up his most misanthropic outbursts, he goes on: "I needed someone to help channel my turbulence, someone to wash away my flaws so that I might create more than I destroyed." Panov the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

creator, his woman the inspirer. He rationalizes one effort to escape without Galina by explaining that "What mattered most to her—as it once had to me—was perfecting her battements tendus." He's sure she can't understand the overwhelming issue in which he has involved himself, and after worrying that her promising career at the Kirov might make her forget him, he decides that "If she were willing to sacrifice this for me, it would confirm that our love was truly exalted, which meant that she *would* find a way out,"—and starts out to swim across the Black Sea. This man, whom book and ballet reviewers have called noble, courageous, heroic, was capable of getting his wife pregnant only as a last resort—she had begged for a child for years and he'd refused—when it appeared they might have a better chance to escape together with a baby. "I had been reluctant, but this was the time. As soon as we were sure, I told OVIR [the visa office] that if they threw me out now, the world would know how they separated a father from his unborn child, not only a husband from his wife." (Galina later miscarried.)

That the woman must submit, creatively and domestically, to her master is a major theme in both of the ballets choreographed by Panov in the West that I've seen. *Heart of the Mountain,* a remake of a ballet in which he'd danced with great success in Russia, has the heroine murdered for being so independent as to refuse a marriage arranged by the elders of the tribe. His version of *Le Sacre du Printemps* is one long recital of cruelty to the sacrificial victim. She not only gives her life for the renewal of the tribe's fertility, but is compelled to be physically tortured and thrown around in the process. In both ballets the role of the punisher has been danced by Panov, and the victim by Galina.

Political sympathies can shield a lot of nastiness. In addition to our residual sympathy for the European survivors of the Holocaust, there's still a lurking fear of the Red Menace out there. The New York Times book reviewer waved the tattered flags of "Soviet bosses" and "inhuman political regime" et cetera in celebration of the martyred Panovs, as if the last twenty years had never been. Certainly the Panovs endured privation, and the world fastened on this one outspoken dancer and his wife to symbolize the thousands of Jews and dissidents who are being restrained in the Soviet Union. But the Panovs have failed to identify themselves with the still-disturbing issue of censorship and religious persecution since their departure from Russia. As Panov reveals himself, I can't help seeing his political cries as the last, the only successful gesture in a lifelong tantrum.

Had Panov been less aggressive, less selfish, the attachment he formed for the West on his first visit, in 1959 while touring with the Kirov, might not have been noticed. I don't disapprove of aggressive selfish people—all artists are that to some degree. Yet, a member of a ballet company, especially one in the lower ranks, must be a team player. Along with his pliés, a dancer must learn to follow the rules, blend in with the group, subordinate his individual desires to the style of the aggregate. Individual freedom goes just so far in a profession that holds together through a system of stratified, voluntarily agreed upon and mostly benevolent dictatorships. It's amazing that Panov was tolerated, and even rewarded, as long as he was, in the state-run, showcase Kirov company.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Since their release the Panovs have used their hard-won artistic freedom entirely for their own purposes. They've danced in the West only as guest artists, in showpieces they brought from Russia and in Valery's rearrangements of twentieth century Russian ballets. They haven't joined a company, or started their own company, or worked under any Western choreographer, or learned any roles in the contemporary repertory. Justification for the extraordinary output of effort and emotion expended on the Panovs was based on his greatness as an artist. That was really the only serious claim made for or by Panov. He certainly didn't represent the larger social or political issues that got mixed up in it later. "Here is a dancer who never appears in the West, although he is one of the few great male dancers in the world," wrote Clive Barnes in 1968, setting the tone for all the arguments that followed.

Barnes discovered Panov in 1967, and reported to the New York Times and British publications on the phenomenon he saw on his trips to Russia. Few other Western critics had Barnes' opportunities for travel, or his extensive readership, so his raptures went mostly unchallenged. Panov, learning of the impression he'd made on so powerful a critic, was encouraged to think his talents might be more appreciated outside of Russia. The rescue campaign, mounted in earnest by Barnes' wife and sister-in-law in 1972 after the application to emigrate to Israel, was accompanied by more extravagent praise in Barnes' columns. We heard over and over about this precious talent that must be saved for Art; and when the campaign succeeded Barnes continued to be the Panovs' chief apologist, preparing us for their genius, explaining away possible disappointment by enumerating the troubles they'd been through, their lapse of training, their emotional wounds. Barnes was setting us up, daring us not to agree that it had all been worth while. True to the Times' habit of reinforcing its errors rather than admitting them, Anna Kisselgoff was explaining to readers in 1978 that Panov was a type of dancer we had no precedents for, but in *his* class a magnificent one. And the audience, primed at first with political good feeling—by now the Panovs don't even need that—did agree.

The Panovs had managed to forestall non-Barnesian critical evaluation for four years by not appearing in New York, and by dancing in special circumstances where few critics were present. Something always mitigated against their being seen to best advantage. They were injured, they were embroiled in a contract wrangle with their first manager, they danced in unfavorable outdoor pavilions and unseeable indoor arenas, Panov was getting older, maybe he'd already passed his peak, they couldn't get hired by the most prestigious companies. I'd seen them once in Philadelphia and twice in California, my bad impressions always toned down by those considerations. Now, after their New York debut with the Berlin Opera Ballet—Panov told one interviewer he had at last overcome all his physical setbacks and was dancing his best—I still think both Panovs are dancers who have distorted their modest talents in the interest of sensationalism and audience appeal.

Their frankly aggressive performing style is well suited to the thrill-oriented way many people now look at ballet. Panov has a high jump, which he hypes with a pushy, sprinter's drive and makes more com-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plicated by tucking his legs up under his buttocks or twisting his hips in midair. To many people this looks daring and energetic; actually it's not as hard as pointing your feet, straightening your knees and achieving the smoothest classical line. Galina Panova is more classically aligned, but she tends to look chunky and muscular. Both of them, especially when they're doing their versions of bravura classical numbers like the *Corsaire* pas de deux, dance with one ear on the audience, waiting for the first sign of approval to waft over the footlights. Then they really start grandstanding. Once I saw them work a crowd to such a pitch that someone threw flowers before the dance was over, and Valery, after taking many bows, theatrically picked them up, every petal, and shushed the hysterics so that the dance could continue.

Most of the Panovs' repertory is tailored for them, to feature their tricks, minimize the subtler points of technique and provide a lot of mime and sentimental trappings to gain the audience's love. He does a melodramatic Petrouchka solo and a Harlequin dance, both of which incorporate poses from well-known photographs of the Diaghilev era but largely omit the Fokine choreography. When he must interpret a role not specifically made for him, he turns it into a personal trip anyway. His Hilarion in *Giselle* with the Berlin might have been misplaced from another ballet. Adding spins, leaps and florid gestures to what is essentially a minor, non-dancing role, he played every scene with a Shakespearean combination of bluster and bathos. He betrayed the romantic style of the ballet and threw its plot line all out of shape by diverting the audience's attention away from the leading characters.

As a choreographer, in the two ballets I've seen, he works in a formalistic, contemporary European opera-house mode that resembles the post-revolutionary work of Yuri Grigorovich, now a ballet-master at the Bolshoi. The emphasis is on histrionics and the flashier elements of classical technique, set in stripped-down scenarios and stagings. Panov's choreograhic idol was John Cranko, and he indicates in his book that he had hopes of joining the Stuttgart Ballet if Cranko had lived. But his ballets have neither the ingenuity nor the caloric content supplied by Cranko, who knew how to fill a stage with lush activity and create the glamorous aura of the old classics without their specialized virtuosic demands.

Amid the tangled ideology that results when art and politics mix, the question of what is revolutionary in ballet is a particularly thorny one. Ballet by definition is elitist, hierarchical, regimented, standardized, traditional; attempts to democratize it have usually only cheapened its quality. The true reformers like Balanchine—even, some might say, Cranko—extend the possibilities of ballet as an art but haven't relinquished its aristocratic values. Panov claims the best Soviet choreographers have been prevented from realizing their full potential because of political pressures, but his own work hasn't pushed beyond what they accomplished. He doesn't appear to have sustained any influences from the Western choreographers he's been exposed to either. As for his philosophy as shown in the two ballets, it's as repressive and authoritarian as the regime he hated.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews

MARVIN MUDRICK

Father Knows Best

SURELY, HAVING BEEN TOLD THAT TOLSTOY wrote the following paragraph, readers would place it at once among the earlier pronouncements by the stuffed shirt Karenin as he tries to bring to her senses his erring wife:

> You have committed one of the most serious and at the same time odious crimes that a wife and mother can commit, and having committed this crime you are not doing what is natural to any, I don't say Christian, but perfectly ordinary woman who has not lost all conscience—you are not shocked at your sin, you don't repent of it, you don't acknowledge your fall and humiliation, you don't try to save yourself from the possibility of repeating your sin, but on the contrary you wish by some deceitful means (divorce) to make it possible for the sin to continue, to make that sin cease to be a sin and become something permitted.

Actually it's in a letter from Tolstoy himself,[1] thirty years after *Anna Karenina,* trying to bring to her senses a married woman who has been carrying on with his son Andrey (whom a few years earlier he enjoins to "give up drinking, smoking, gipsies, horses, dogs"—i.e. all the pleasures that at Andrey's age Tolstoy found just as irresistible). As it happened, Tolstoy had no better luck than Karenin. In fact Yekaterina's divorce came through and she and Andrey were married: this was the way out that Anna and Vronsky might have taken too but somehow missed, perhaps because authors can do anything they please—can turn doors into walls—whereas heavy fathers may well get trampled by the rush for the exit.

Tolstoy isn't a reasonable man, early or late; or his very reasonableness is partial and deceptive—as when in *Anna Karenina* he points out that the sentimental and pietistic Countess Lydia Ivanovna isn't the best judge of Anna: " 'I can understand immorality,' she went on, not quite truthfully, because she never could understand what it was that led women to immorality . . . "; and Aha! goes the reader, struck by Tolstoy's tactful sophistication which so plainly implies that passion isn't characteristic of silly women and can overwhelm even the most respectable woman, that Anna (unlike Yekaterina thirty years later) isn't to be merely condemned, that pleasures (unlike Andrey's thirty years later) aren't to be dismissed

[1] TOLSTOY'S LETTERS, selected, edited and translated by *R. F. Christian*. Scribners. 2 vols. $35.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as alarming and unclean; yet here is Anna in total collapse a moment after "her bewitching dream of happiness . . . [has] come to pass":

> Looking at him, she felt her humiliation physically, and could say nothing more. He felt what a murderer must feel when looking at the body he has deprived of life. The body he had deprived of life was their love, the first period of their love. There was something frightful and revolting in the recollection of what had been paid for with this terrible price of shame. The shame she felt at her spiritual nakedness communicated itself to him. But in spite of the murderer's horror of the body of his victim, that body must be cut in pieces and hidden away, and he must make use of what he has obtained by the murder.

Strong stuff, this moment of truth (" 'What bliss?' she said with disgust and horror"), which, coming to it in so celebrated a novel, we don't dare question because we're afraid to seem coarse and ignorant: certainly the authoritative voice wouldn't say it if it weren't true (and how do we check it, do we take a poll of murderers' row or the girls at the office?). Only it isn't God talking, it's Tolstoy, who unreasonably needs to assert that this particular married woman (unlike Yekaterina?), voluntarily clasped for the first time in the arms of her lover, will of course find the sex act frightful and revolting (if she can't manage to close her eyes and think of England), will experience it as the "spiritual" equivalent of rape and murder, will see "her bewitching dream of happiness" crumble instantly. Tolstoy is at odds here not only with common sense but with his own creature. Anna gives evidence by everything else she thinks and says and does that she is physically and passionately in love with Vronsky; she was before and will continue to be after; she never regrets her love for him except when she suspects he doesn't return it; nothing in her nature or circumstances suggests that this time as well as innumerable times afterward she wouldn't enjoy the act; and whatever her apprehensions it isn't likely, the bewitching dream having come to pass, that she would react to Vronsky's first completed pass as old Tolstoy hopes that after his letter Yekaterina will react to future scrimmages with Andrey. Tolstoy the novelist has created a woman alive to pleasures which Tolstoy the bluenose implausibly denies her.

Tolstoy is the tensest and most irascible of great novelists, he dislikes fine moral distinctions (as between agreeable love-making and disagreeable), he is suspicious of the range of feelings and works at segregating right feelings from wrong, the sheep from the goats, he is so intent on keeping a gulf between good and bad that, if the story he's telling threatens to narrow it, he intervenes with misrepresentations and omissions and the loud bullying that silences readers who might otherwise venture a doubt. In *War and Peace,* for instance, he plans to show Natasha, imprudently left alone with her impulses for a trial year by Prince Andrey, falling in love with—no, because *love* is what she feels only for Prince Andrey; rather, becoming *infatuated* with Anatole Kuragin. But Natasha is a good girl and would never do such a thing all by herself, there must be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

witches. So Tolstoy prepares us for Natasha's misstep by bringing her to the opera, a bad place (just look at the ladies in the boxes flaunting their "naked shoulders"!), a place of illusion that gives him his pretext for shouting down the very idea of illusion:

> In the center of the stage sat some girls in red bodices and white skirts. One very fat girl in a white silk dress sat apart on a low bench, to the back of which a piece of green cardboard was glued. They all sang something. When they had finished their song the girl in white went up to the prompter's box, and a man with tight silk trousers over his stout legs, and holding a plume and a dagger, went up to her and began singing, waving his arms about. . . .

Next he brings Natasha to a reading by a fat actress who is, besides, French and immoral: "Mademoiselle Georges, with her bare, fat, dimpled arms, and a red shawl draped over one shoulder, came into the space left vacant for her, and assumed an unnatural pose . . . [,] looked sternly and gloomily at the audience, and began reciting some French verses describing her guilty love for her son. . . . " (It's a relief to learn that in such juvenile travesties Tolstoy, according to the Russian Formalist critics, is using a literary technique, which they call "estrangement.") Poor Natasha, wholesome little home-baked *pirozhok* fresh out of the backwoods, "looked at the fat actress" and, quite disoriented by these scandalous public hoaxes (the arts) to which she has been subjected in the wicked city, "felt herself again completely borne away into this strange senseless world—so remote from her old world—a world in which it was impossible to know what was good or bad": thus Tolstoy has proved beyond a reasonable doubt how "senseless," "unnatural," "bad," unworthy of herself, attributable to external evil forces, and light-years distant from love Natasha's crush on the quite sufficiently insipid Anatole will turn out to be. Anyhow, clearing a space around the nearly faultless Natasha is easier than having to think about women at large, the community of women, all those uncontrollables out there infatuated or in love or on a stage dancing and singing (but thank God actresses are always fat and stupid) or at a ball or the opera in low-cut gowns or at home reading *War and Peace* (in the center of the sofa squatted a fat girl holding on her lap a thick object which consisted of a great many sheets of paper glued to a cardboard backing, and every few minutes she inserted two bare, fat fingers into it to reverse the sheet facing her, all the while giggling, snuffling, scowling, fit as a fiddle and ready for love). There must be witches.

Pierre too, destined for Natasha, is good rather than bad, a high-minded, naïve, and trusting person whom witches can lead by the nose so to speak into if you'll pardon the expression wedded bliss with that gorgeous pin-up Hélène; but class will tell, they can give him a license and lead him to the bedroom door but they can't make him relish for even a moment the prospect of perfectly legal love with his pneumatic spouse: "There is something nasty, something wrong, in the feeling she excites in me," he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

muses *before* the wedding, and forever afterward he feels nothing for her except virtuous loathing. (Earlier in the novel he goes to brothels during drunken sprees, but that's another matter.) As for Hélène herself (or Anna Pavlovna, or almost any other society woman in Tolstoy's fiction), Tolstoy takes such pains to keep her unvaryingly base, trivial, and dull that the reader of English novels is by contrast reminded of belles like Trollope's Lizzie Eustace or the signora Neroni, who are as socially daunting as Hélène but allowed to present themselves to us with a flair that indicates how their lives might seem not only to Snow White and Savonarola but to their lovers and themselves.

Tolstoy's moral anxiety, which is the prevailing tone through much of *War and Peace,* eventually screws itself up to a pitch of cannibal self-righteousness: for instance, the gratification with which he reports Hélène's death (freeing Pierre for Natasha) "in agony" from a self-administered overdose of an abortion drug; above all, the description of Anatole's grossly phallic (doubtless Tolstoy wasn't attending to the image and would have been horrified) physicalness at the moment before it and he are cut off together:

> One large white plump leg twitched rapidly all the time with a feverish tremor. The man was sobbing and choking convulsively. Two doctors . . . were silently doing something to this man's other, gory leg. . . .
>
> The wounded man was shown his amputated leg stained with clotted blood and with the boot still on.
>
> "Oh! Oh, ooh!" he sobbed, like a woman. . . .
>
> In the miserable, sobbing, enfeebled man whose leg had just been amputated . . . [Prince Andrey] recognized Anatole Kuragin. . . .

So much for the dirty beast who wiggled our heroine's pedestal.

If there were no bad men around to tempt them, or if Tolstoy were around to rescue them from the bad men, all women might end as satisfactorily as Natasha: married and mindlessly devoted to a good sort like Pierre, quite under control and submerged in family life ("The old fire very rarely kindled in her face now"), incapable of being interested in ideas or the arts or society, matronly or even slatternly, valuing only "the company of those to whom she could come striding disheveled from the nursery in her dressing-gown, and with joyful face show a yellow instead of a green stain on baby's diaper . . . " (while working on *War and Peace,* still contented with his marriage of a few years and living the patriarchal life on his estate in the country, Tolstoy wrote to a friend that "I am lucky enough to be fettered by chains of rich liquid green and yellow children's shit to Yasnaya Polyana").

In the years before Sofya Andreyevna, the girl he had been most likely to marry was Valeriya Vladimirovna Arsenyeva, his letters to whom are a Bartlett's book of quotations from the anxious male: "As for what you call my cold feelings, I can tell you that they're 1,000 times stronger and better than your feelings, although I do keep them in check"; "I expect a great deal from our correspondence"; "wear a corset, and put on your stockings

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yourself"; "Don't despair of becoming perfect"; "Tell me everything that was, and is, bad in you"; "I'm also sending you Turgenev's *Tales*; . . . in my opinion, they're nearly all charming, but all the same come out with your opinion frankly, however absurd it may be"; "I know many women more intelligent than you, but I've never met one more honest"; "you will teach me to love, I will teach you to think"; "Your principal defect is weakness of character"; "the slightest faux pas destroys everything, and you can't regain a happiness that is lost"; "Nothing else matters as long as you love me and are as I wish, i.e. perfect"; "You are deluding yourself that you have taste [in clothing]"; "It's impossible for you to understand (perhaps you'll understand in time) the indescribably great pleasure one feels from understanding and loving poetry"; "you must talk less, so as to feel more"; "if Mr. Mortier [her piano teacher, of whom Tolstoy is jealous] were to write a love letter to my wife or kiss her hand, and she were to hide this from me . . . , then if I loved my wife, I would shoot myself, or if not, I would get a divorce instantly and flee to the ends of the earth simply out of respect for her and for my name, and from disappointment over my plans for the future"; "*let us never speak* of religion. . . . You know I'm a believer, but . . . this question should not be touched upon, especially by people who want to love each other"; "Religion is a great thing, especially for women"; "I'm *lecturing* again; but what can I do?"; "You're angry that *I'm only able to give lectures*. But . . . all these are the ideas and feelings most precious to me, and I write about them almost with tears in my eyes (believe me); but to you it's all *lecturing and boredom*"; and so at length to the uneasy brush-off letter with its unctuous goodbye and good luck: "Goodbye, dear Valeriya Vladimirovna, Christ be with you; you and I both have a long and splendid road ahead of us, and God grant it may lead you to the happiness you deserve 1,000 times over."

He begged off because he couldn't be sure: "I'm so afraid of marriage," he had written her two weeks earlier, summarizing the short course in Russian melodrama, "that I look at it too sternly and seriously. . . . I'm staking everything on this one card. If I don't find complete happiness, I shall ruin everything, my talent, my heart; I'll become a drunkard and a gambler; I'll steal, if I haven't the courage to cut my throat." He wrote the novella *Family Happiness* soon after breaking with Valeriya, who was the model for its heroine: an attempt to turn his anxieties and expectations about marriage into an account of their marriage as it might have been. The narrator is the girl herself (one of the very rare exceptions in Tolstoy's fiction to his cutomary choice of omniscience), and the point of view contributes a voyeuristic tinge to this sentimental, spiteful, self-pitying, and—to use a Tolstoyan epithet—impure male fantasy: An older man serves as father, uncle, guardian, priest, teacher, playmate, husband, and lover to a teen-aged girl, who after an extended bucolic honeymoon quite to his taste proves to be unworthy of him, compromising her blind and slavish devotion by learning to enjoy the big city, parties, even the flattery of other men; but at the end he condescends to a reconciliation back in the boondocks for the fading twilight of their life (she's about twenty-two now, he's thirty-five or so)—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Let all be as it was before! Surely that is possible?" I asked, looking into his eyes; but their gaze was clear and calm, and did not look deeply into mine.

Even while I spoke, I knew that my wishes and my petition were impossible. He smiled calmly and gently; and I thought it the smile of an old man.

"How young you are still!" he said, "and I am so old. What you seek in me is no longer there. Why deceive ourselves?" he added, still smiling.

Why indeed? but seldom has an important writer been more self-deceived: " 'That's the truth, my dear one,' he said, drawing down my head and kissing it, not a lover any longer but an old friend," while outside on cue "the fragrant freshness of the night rose ever stronger and sweeter from the garden." The slightest faux pas destroys everything ("That day ended the romance of our marriage"), and you can't regain a happiness that is lost, except maybe by taking the six-week Masters-and-Johnson course in regaining lost happiness. What a splendid fellow! and how lucky she is that he doesn't cut his throat or shoot himself.

On October 1, 1862, married just a week, Tolstoy wrote to his sister-in-law, "I am now very drawn to writing a free work de longue haleine—a novel or the like," and he added, "Life is very, very good for me, and I flatter myself with the hope that it is for Sonya too." He was happy and confident, he felt he had staked everything on the fatal card and won (and therefore could put Valeriya and *Family Happiness* behind him; but, though he must have thought otherwise, he wasn't able to put the sex question behind him), soon he began writing, and for more than five years the long breath animated and sustained a "free work" that he himself insisted wasn't a novel (later he called *Anna Karenina* "my first novel"). He hadn't the patience for a novel, not yet anyway. The oddest fact about *War and Peace* is that, though fifteen hundred pages is a long breath all right, scarcely a scene in it breathes for longer than a moment. Not only are the chapters astonishingly and uniformly short, but Tolstoy almost never permits anything between the characters to expand dramatically, rather he will wrap it up with his own summaries and judgments or theirs (as if what people say or do is much less important than what it all means) or (as if enough is enough) will cut it off abruptly: "Next day Anatole left for Petersburg"; or "Every act of theirs, which appears to them an act of their own will, is in an historical sense involuntary, and is related to the whole course of history and predestined from eternity"; or—

For a long time Pierre did not sleep, but lay with eyes open in the darkness listening to the regular snoring of Platon, who lay beside him, and he felt that the world that had been shattered was once more stirring in his soul with a new beauty and on new and unshakable foundations.

Tolstoy is so impatient with character and dialogue that he continually lapses into the most banal fictional shorthand (so that readers won't have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to waste their time thinking): Prince Andrey has "firm clear-cut features" (not blurry irresolute ones); Speranski has "very plump, soft, and white hands" (cf. Anatole's "white plump leg" before Tolstoy brings down his retributory surgical saw); Natasha is "not pretty [pretty means sexy and out of control] but full of life." Because Tolstoy wants us to know at once, there are repetitions and changes and patterns and accidents but no surprises or developments. Only the wolf-hunt and (except when he's getting on with his laborious determinism) the military scenes seem to spring from sources outside his conscious and imperious need to control; but Pierre's and Prince Andrey's great moments, whether gazing into the blue sky of infinity at Austerlitz or finding the secret of life in Platon Karatayev, read nowadays like recruitment posters for the latest school of acupuncture. Revelations don't come off in *War and Peace* because all Tolstoy is sure of is what's doing, the relationships are clear and easy to follow and one keeps reading to see how they come out, but there's no moral coherence, there's a will but there isn't a way; he can't make out what it all means (babbling about green fields or blue skies or "new and unshakable foundations" or "the whole course of history" doesn't help), which is all that matters to him.

The meaning of *Anna Karenina,* on the other hand, is supplied by its subject: All for love against God and man. True, one suspects that the voice speaking the novel's epigraph—"Vengeance is mine; I will repay"—isn't God's but Tolstoy's, and that Anna and Vronsky aren't against God or man or even law and order but against the swarm of social parasites at Anna Pavlovna's soiree whose vileness Tolstoy was so delighted to memorialize in the opening chapter of *War and Peace*. Nevertheless he now has a scaffolding which will support a continuous and self-explanatory narrative. Something can therefore happen, but the fact that the heroine is Tolstoy's only completely sympathetic worldly woman and also one of the primary heroines of literature can hardly be accounted for by his choice of subject; there are no witches here but there is something like a miracle, for Anna is what she is, as in her *real* moment of truth: not when she reacts to Vronsky's love-making "with disgust and horror," but when she is so publicly unnerved by Vronsky's fall at the steeplechase that her husband feels obliged to lecture her (as Tolstoy lectures Yekaterina and Valeriya)—

> "I asked you once before to conduct yourself in Society so that evil tongues might be unable to say anything against you. There was a time when I spoke about inner relations; now I do not speak of them. I speak now of external relations. Your conduct was improper and I do not wish it to occur again."
>
> She did not hear half that he said, but felt afraid of him and wondered whether it was true that Vronsky was not hurt. Was it of him they were speaking when they said that he was not hurt but the horse had broken its back? She only smiled with simulated irony when he had finished; and she did not reply because she had not heard what he said. Karenin had begun to speak boldly, but when he realized clearly what he was talking about, the fear she was experiencing communicated itself to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him. He saw her smile and a strange delusion possessed him. "She smiles at my suspicions. In a moment she will tell me what she told me then: that these suspicions are groundless and ridiculous."

Now that a complete disclosure was impending, he expected nothing so much as that she would, as before, answer him mockingly that his suspicions were ridiculous and groundless. What he knew was so terrible that he was now prepared to believe anything. But the expression of her frightened and gloomy face did not now even promise deception.

"Perhaps I am mistaken," said he. "In that case I beg your pardon."

—so that now at last she can tell Karenin the anxious husband (as well as Tolstoy the anxious father and suitor) all, and then, her soul suspended and too full for anything less than catastrophe, await her lover:

"No, you were not mistaken," she said slowly, looking despairingly into his cold face. "You were not mistaken. I was, and cannot help being, in despair. I listen to you but I am thinking of him. I love him, I am his mistress, I cannot endure you, I am afraid of you, and I hate you. . . . Do what you like to me."

And throwing herself back into the corner of the carriage she burst into sobs, hiding her face in her hands. Karenin did not move, and did not change the direction in which he was looking, but his face suddenly assumed the solemn immobility of the dead, and that expression did not alter till they reached the house. As they were driving up to it, he turned his face to her still with the same expression and said:

"Yes! But I demand that the external conditions of propriety shall be observed till"—his voice trembled—"till I take measures to safeguard my honor and inform you of them."

He alighted first and helped her out. In the presence of the servants he pressed her hand, re-entered the carriage, and drove off toward Petersburg.

After he had gone the Princess Betsy's footman brought Anna a note.

"I sent to Alexey to inquire about his health. He writes that he is safe and sound, but in despair."

"Then he will come," thought she. "What a good thing it is that I spoke out."

She looked at the clock. She had three hours still to wait, and the memory of the incidents of their last meeting fired her blood.

"Dear me, how light it is! It is dreadful, but I love to see his face, and I love this fantastic light. . . . My husband! Ah, yes. . . . Well, thank heaven that all is over with him!" [All the ellipses in this passage are Tolstoy's.]

Against poor Karenin, who deserves this as little as he deserves Anna, against the gawkers and gossips at the racetrack and even the stick Vronsky, whom Tolstoy can't or won't make vivid enough to justify Anna's passion as more than a necessary reflex of despair, and especially against Tolstoy himself, Anna is right.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The live ones in the novel are Anna and her brother, Stiva. Karenin the vulnerable bureaucrat is consummate to the last button and rather touching; Karenin temporarily irradiated by Christian love is too useful to the plot (and like Tolstoy's occasional fond misconception of himself); Karenin the dupe of charlatans is a crude reduction. Levin and Kitty are retreads of Pierre and Natasha but more acceptable because less pretentiously childlike and given more space and leisurely detail, though Levin's communications with the soil or the firmament aren't any more apocalyptic than Pierre's or Prince Andrey's. Stiva Oblonsky, however, is, like Anna, an anomaly and a marvel for as long as Tolstoy lets him be himself (he is slighted and diminished after the first half of the novel): lavishly unfaithful to his likable and hard-pressed wife; a shameless sensualist and materialist; cheerful, helpful, kind, affectionate—Tolstoy's only sympathetic representation ever of a man of the world, to the point of even allowing him to be straight-arrow Levin's best friend! *Anna Karenina* is Tolstoy's generous and unintentional tribute and farewell to worldliness.

After *Anna* all of his fiction—with a single exception—is obsessive (nothing but sex and death) and minimalist (nothing but the truth), the work of a prodigious eccentric who has finally closed his mind with a bang: nonviolent, non-alcoholic, celibate, vegetarian fiction with a mad gleam in its eye and a razor edge. (It all comes from the white-bearded apostle of love and of the free individual conscience, who writes to his chief disciple, Chertkov, denouncing contraception: "It's impossible to write about it and argue against it, just as it's impossible to argue against a man trying to prove that copulation with dead bodies is pleasant and harmless. A man who doesn't feel what elephants feel, that copulation generally is an act humilitating both to oneself and one's partner, and therefore repulsive . . . is on the level of an animal"; but where this logic leaves elephants remains to be seen.) It's decisive, energetic, steamroller fiction, as impossible to live with as the wife-murderer "hero" of *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

The exception is *Hadji Murad*. Tolstoy left it unpublished and was still working on it in his seventy-fifth year, when he addressed a number of questions to somebody who had known the historical Hadji Murad a half-century earlier (it isn't the old crank asking, it's the novelist: "Did he speak even a little Russian?" "Did he limp noticeably?"; "Did the house where you lived upstairs, and he downstairs, have a garden?"; "What were the murids [followers] like who were with . . . him?"; "Did they have rifles on them when they escaped?"). A half-century earlier Tolstoy himself had spent three years in the Caucasus with the army (one of his letters mentions that "Shamil's number two, a certain Hadji Murad, went over to the Russian government the other day"): he was stationed in a Cossack village just across the Terek River from the mountain peoples whom the Russians were trying to drive back and subdue. As far as possible from Petersburg, Moscow, and Yasnaya Polyana, both the Cossack on this side of the Terek and the mountain tribesman on the other lived Tolstoy's buried life. Both *The Cossacks* (some of the writing of which was contemporaneous with *Family Happiness*!) and, fifty years later, *Hadji Murad* are tributes to unfussed-over lives—Only the unexamined life is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

worth living—from the man who young and old insisted on examining his life to the last discreditable millimeter: "all my nastiness, stupidity, depravity, and meanness," as he haughtily summed himself up to his biographer Biryukov (his favorite writer all his life was Rousseau, who he thought had done the best job ever of spilling the beans about himself). Tolstoy knew that neither the Cossacks nor the Chechens would have been impressed by Tolstoy the young self-seeker or Tolstoy the old crank; and he had always loved and envied their ways; so, writing about them, he was free to experience the moral feelings he elsewhere in his work could do little but make a case for: modesty and love.

Eroshka the old Cossack hunter tells the young soldier from Moscow, "I'll take you hunting and teach you to fish. I'll show you Chechens and find a girl for you, if you like—even that!"

> "You, an old man—and say such things," replied Olenin. "Why, it's a sin!"
>
> "A sin? Where's the sin?" said the old man emphatically. "A sin to look at a nice girl? A sin to have some fun with her? Or is it a sin to love her? Is that so in your parts? . . . "

That's how it is back in Moscow, but out here in Eden Olenin can rejoice in Tolstoy's only sympathetic—and lingeringly specific!—representation of a superbly physical woman in all of his writings:

> Olenin went on reading, but did not understand a word of what was written in the book that lay open before him. He kept lifting his eyes from it and looking at the powerful young woman who was moving about. Whether she stepped into the moist morning shadow thrown by the house, or went out into the middle of the yard lit up by the joyous young light, so that the whole of her stately figure in its bright colored garment gleamed in the sunshine and cast a black shadow—he always feared to lose any one of her movements. It delighted him to see how freely and gracefully her figure bent: into what folds her only garment, a pink smock, draped itself on her bosom and along her shapely legs; how she drew herself up and her tight-drawn smock showed the outline of her heaving bosom, how the soles of her narrow feet in her worn red slippers rested on the ground without altering their shape; how her strong arms with the sleeves rolled up, exerting the muscles, used the spade almost as if in anger, and how her deep dark eyes sometimes glanced at him. Though the delicate brows frowned, yet her eyes expressed pleasure and a knowledge of her own beauty.

Maryanka is as admirable as a man! and talks like one ("The girl was milking the buffalo-cow in the shed. 'Can't keep quiet, the damned thing!' came her impatient voice . . . "), and attracts the masculine epithets—"her virile upright bearing"; "her firm masculine tread"; "her beautiful powerful form"; "Her features might have been considered too masculine and almost harsh had it not been for her tall stately figure, her powerful

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chest and shoulders, and especially the severe yet tender expression of her long dark eyes." When Olenin thinks she may be watching he tries to show off, sitting his horse "with a slightly conscious elegance," smartly dressed, glowing with youth and health: "He thought himself handsome, agile, and like a brave; but he was mistaken." Try as he may in hunting, fighting, drinking, courting, he will never be one of them, he can only admire them and set down how they look and move, what they say and do, with a loving attention to the flow and detail of dailiness in this primitive outpost that recalls not only the subject but the modesty and strength of Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter.*

As for *Hadji Murad,* apart from an episode in which Tolstoy makes sure we understand how contemptible Tsar Nicholas was ("the welfare and happiness of the whole world depended on him, and wearied though he was he would still not refuse the universe his assistance"), the author is even more remarkable than in *The Cossacks* for his self-effacement. Hadji Murad speaks for himself, as when he tells the Russian officer the story of his captivity and escape:

> " . . . Akhmet Khan did as he pleased. He sent a company of soldiers to seize me, put me in chains, and tied me to a cannon.
>
> "So they kept me six days," he continued. "On the seventh day they untied me and started to take me to Temir-Khan-Shura. Forty soldiers with loaded guns had me in charge. My hands were tied and I knew they had orders to kill me if I tried to escape.
>
> "As we approached Mansokha the path became narrow, and on the right was an abyss about a hundred and twenty yards deep. I went to the right—to the very edge. A soldier wanted to stop me, but I jumped down and pulled him with me. He was killed outright but I, as you see, remained alive.
>
> "Ribs, head, arms, and leg—all were broken! I tried to crawl but grew giddy and fell asleep. I awoke wet with blood. A shepherd saw me and called some people who carried me to an *aoul.* My ribs and head healed, and my leg too, only it has remained short," and Hadji Murad stretched out his crooked leg. "It still serves me, however, and that is well," said he.
>
> "The people heard the news and began coming to me. I recovered and went to Tselmess. The Avars again called on me to rule over them," he went on, with tranquil, confident pride, "and I agreed."

One of the most moving qualities of Tolstoy's last long work of fiction is his chivalrousness toward the *civilized* women out there, living their lives in the dangerous border country—intelligent, resourceful, charming, gallant, like the colonel's wife Princess Marya Vasilievna, "smiling the radiant smile of a happy woman":

> Leaving Hadji Murad with his wife, Vorontsov went to his office to do what was necessary about reporting the fact of Hadji Murad's having come over to the Russians. When he had written a report . . . [he]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hurried home, afraid that his wife might be vexed with him for forcing on her this terrible stranger, who had to be treated in such a way that he should not take offense, and yet not too kindly. But his fears were needless. Hadji Murad was sitting in an armchair with little Bulka, Vorontsov's stepson, on his knee, and with bent head was listening attentively to the interpreter who was translating to him the words of the laughing Marya Vasilievna. Marya Vasilievna was telling him that if every time a kunak [sworn brother] admired anything of his he made him a present of it, he would soon have to go about like Adam. . . .

"He is delightful, your brigand!" said Marya Vasilievna to her husband in French. "Bulka has been admiring his dagger, and he has given it to him."

Later, at dinner, "he hardly ate anything":

"He is afraid we shall poison him," Marya Vasilievna remarked to her husband. "He has helped himself from the place where I took my helping." Then instantly turning to Hadji Murad she asked him through the interpreter when he would pray again. Hadji Murad lifted five fingers and pointed to the sun. "Then it will soon be time," and Vorontsov drew out his watch and pressed a spring. The watch struck four and one quarter. This evidently surprised Hadji Murad, and he asked to hear it again and to be allowed to look at the watch.

"Voilà l'occasion! Donnez-lui la montre," said the Princess to her husband.

Vorontsov at once offered the watch to Hadji Murad.[2]

The latter placed his hand on his breast and took the watch. He touched the spring several times, listened, and nodded his head approvingly.

And the same old man who wrote that fire-and-brimstone letter to his son's mistress depicts with love, amusement, and admiration Major Petrov's mistress, "a handsome, fair-haired, very freckled, childless woman of thirty . . . the major's faithful companion . . . [who] looked after him like a nurse—a very necessary matter, since he often drank himself into oblivion":

"Plucky fellow! He rushed at Arslan like a wolf! His face quite changed!"

"But he'll be up to tricks—he's a terrible rogue, I should say," remarked Petrovsky.

"It's a pity there aren't more Russian rogues of such a kind!" suddenly put in Marya Dmitrievna with vexation. "He has lived a week

[2] Not only Colonel Vorontsov; in *Hadji Murad* even the generals are allowed to behave like grown-ups. Only the Tsar is as stupid as all the commanders are in *War and Peace* except Tolstoy's unhistorical surrogate, Kutuzov, whom, revising *War and Peace,* Tolstoy turned from a senile weakling resembling the historical figure to a folk-hero resembling, in his notions at least, Tolstoy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with us and we have seen nothing but good from him. He is courteous, wise, and just," she added.

"How did you find that out?"

"No matter, I did find it out!"

"She's quite smitten, and that's a fact!" said the major, who had just entered the room.

"Well, and if I am smitten? What's that to you? Why run him down if he's a good man? Though he's a Tartar he's still a good man!"

Hadji Murad dies, as he must, in battle:

Another bullet hit Hadji Murad in the left side. He lay down in the ditch and again pulled some cotton wool out of his *beshmet* [undershirt] and plugged the wound. This wound in the side was fatal and he felt that he was dying. Memories and pictures succeeded one another with extraordinary rapidity in his imagination. Now he saw the powerful Abu Nutsal Khan, dagger in hand and holding up his severed cheek he rushed at his foe . . . , then he saw his son Yusuf, his wife Sofiat, and then the pale, red-bearded face of his enemy Shamil with its half-closed eyes. All these images passed through his mind without evoking any feeling within him—neither pity nor anger nor any kind of desire: everything seemed so insignificant in comparison with what was beginning, or had already begun, within him.

Yet his strong body continued the thing that he had commenced. Gathering together his last strength he rose from behind the bank, fired his pistol at a man who was just running toward him, and hit him. The man fell. Then Hadji Murad got quite out of the ditch, and limping heavily went dagger in hand straight at the foe.

Some shots cracked and he reeled and fell. Several militiamen with triumphant shrieks rushed toward the fallen body. But the body that seemed to be dead suddenly moved. First the uncovered, bleeding, shaven head rose; then the body with hands holding to the trunk of a tree. He seemed so terrible that those who were running toward him stopped short. But suddenly a shudder passed through him, he staggered away from the tree and fell on his face, stretched out at full length like a thistle that had been mown down, and he moved no more.

He did not move, but still he felt.

When Hadji Aga, who was the first to reach him, struck him on the head with a large dagger, it seemed to Hadji Murad that someone was striking him with a hammer and he could not understand who was doing it or why. That was his last consciousness of any connection with his body. He felt nothing more and his enemies kicked and hacked at what had no longer anything in common with him.

Afterward (though earlier in the story, because Tolstoy reserves Hadji Murad's death for the end), "shall I show you a novelty? You won't be frightened, Marya Dmitrievna?"

"Why should I be frightened?" she replied.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Here it is!" said Kamenev, taking out a man's head and holding it up in the light of the moon. "Do you recognize it?"

It was a shaven head with salient brows, black short-cut beard and moustaches, one eye open and the other half-closed. The shaven skull was cleft, but not right through, and there was congealed blood in the nose. The neck was wrapped in a blood-stained towel. Notwithstanding the many wounds on the head, the blue lips still bore a kindly childlike expression.

Marya Dmitrievna looked at it, and without a word turned away and went quickly into the house.

Major Petrov, on the other hand, "looked long at it with drunken eyes":

"All the same, he was a fine fellow!" said he. "Let me kiss him!"

"Yes, it's true. It was a valiant head," said one of the officers.

Tolstoy gives Marya Dmitrievna the last angry outburst: "You're all cut-throats!" But they are all in it together, and the old novelist sees and feels it all.

Poetry from Japan
A Zen Wave
Basho's Haiku and Zen
by Robert Aiken - $12.50
Forward by W.S. Merwin
"A superb book on Basho, real life, and poetry all at once. I'm grateful."
Gary Snyder

One Robe, One Bowl
The Zen Poetry of Ryōkan
Translated by John Stevens
$6.95 - Hard Cover, $3.50 - Soft Cover

Poetry from China
Translated and Introduced by
JONATHAN CHAVES
"...Chaves is now a major translator in his own right." Journal of Asian Studies
...an outstanding contribution to that still small number of books that present classical Chinese poetry in both accurate and enjoyable English translation."
Choice

Pilgrims of the Clouds
Poems and Essays from Ming China
By Yüan Hung-tao and His Brothers
$6.95 - Soft Cover - Just Published

Heaven My Blanket, Earth My Pillow
Sung Dynasty Poems
By Yang Wan-Li
$7.95 - Hard Cover, $4.95 - Soft Cover

John Weatherhill, Inc.
149 Madison Avenue • New York • NY 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS

Necessities of Memory

> I believed that the aim of literature was to prevent time from vanishing, but my own time I had thrown away.[1]
>
> "Don't be annoyed with me," Pearl said suddenly. "I know about memory too. It's what keeps the others alive, familiar. It's forgetting them that is the second death, the real death."[2]
>
> At night, when sleep is elusive, I sometimes think that the looking was the finding, that the life of seven sins was the avoidance of the eighth, the deadliest sin: the sin of forgetting.[3]

LITERATURE AS MEMORY: Proustian indulgence in the luxury of a personal past has yielded to new urgencies of recollection. Current novels reiterate—as in the sentences quoted above—a hopeful self-consciousness about the processes of preservation implicit in literary endeavor, but desperation underlies the hope. Forgetting as death, as sin, as fearful dissipation threatens the integrity of the word; the necessities of memory solidify pain and horror. Retreat into the distant past (for Americans, the nineteenth century, or even the 1920s) or into flurries of private nostalgia may alleviate the tensions of immediate reality, but more often historical and personal memory alike testify to a past whose recapturing implies the permanence of anguish. To insist, as many novels now find occasion to do, that acts of imaginative creation constitute rituals of remembrance blurs the line between fiction and fact. Novelists have often enjoyed doing just that; now, as they claim for their artifices the status of archaeological reconstruction, they lay claim also to a significant ground of literary value. Fiction has become a way of holding on.

Holding on to what? The public past that seems to obsess us most in the late 1970s belongs to the Second World War. Three of the current crop of novels concern themselves with this period, its preambles and aftermath: *Shosha, The Eighth Sin,* and *La Belle Edmée.*[4] Isaac Singer writes of the Jews in pre-Nazi Warsaw; Stefan Kanfer reminds us of the plight of the Gypsies; Suzanne Prou imagines an opportunistic young Frenchwoman living through the war years. All try to personalize the large social experience of the relatively recent past, preserving history's reality by transforming it to the stuff of memory. If they lend importance to private experience by understanding it in a vast context, they also risk their fiction's dignity. Memory can undermine as well as reinforce: characters

[1] SHOSHA, by *Isaac Bashevis Singer.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $8.95.
[2] THE CHANGELING, by *Joy Williams.* Doubleday. $7.95.
[3] THE EIGHTH SIN, by *Stefan Kanfer.* Random House. $8.95.
[4] LA BELLE EDMÉE, by *Suzanne Prou.* Harper and Row. $8.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may gain by association of their suffering with that of a nation or a race, but their self-importance may also collapse under the implicit commentary of larger sufferings.

Isaac Singer, most practised of these writers, on the whole weathers the test he sets himself. His unerring sense of detail rescues him from pretension and gives to his smallest narrative interpolations the force of parable. For example: a small boy learns about atoms. The next day he explains to a simple-minded contemporary. "I told her that each atom is a world in itself, with myriads of tiny human beings, animals, and birds. There are Gentiles there and Jews. The men build houses, towers, towns, bridges, without realizing how infinitely small they are. They speak many languages." When he adds that a single drop of water may contain "myriads of such worlds," his interlocutor inquires whether the inhabitants don't get drowned. "In order not to make things too complicated, I said, 'They all know how to swim.' " The reader responds happily to the sheer comic inventiveness of all this, but the episode also speaks of the imaginative history of a writer (this boy, like so many of Singer's protagonists, will grow up to be a professional writer, red-headed and balding and vegetarian like his creator). The child invents and invents more in order to make the mysterious comprehensible for his hearer and in order to express its wonder for himself. Beyond the psychological authenticity of his creativity, however, lies a yet more compelling source of power. The fanciful elaboration of the nature of atoms tells us about atoms as well as about the elaborator, verbalizing fantasies which even in their falsity epitomize the marvel of the self-contained minute units we posit but never see. Aaron Greidinger, narrator and central character of *Shosha*, makes abstractions real by humanizing them. So does the novel that contains him.

The struggle between reality and unreality, in various shifting definitions of both, occupies Aaron throughout the narrative. "I was brought up on three dead languages," the novel begins—"Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish . . .—and in a culture that developed in Babylon: the Talmud. . . . [In the cheder] I studied not arithmetic, geography, physics, chemistry, or history, but the laws governing an egg laid on a holiday and sacrifices in a temple destroyed two thousand years ago." His boyhood coincides with the First World War; his manhood brings him to the brink of the second. Living in a culture separate from yet always subject to the vicissitudes of the larger world, the youth retreats into fantasies from which ultimately he begins to make a living. Central to his imaginative life is his memory of his mentally-retarded playmate, Shosha. Although he does not see her for many years, he dreams of her at night, preserves her in his waking consciousness, and finally finds and marries her. She has become by this time yet more completely isolated from "reality" than in her childhood, unable to comprehend social facts, physically dwarfed, mentally incompetent, still devoted to the boy who told her stories long ago. Other, more eligible women present themselves lavishly to Aaron. He could marry a rich American who loves him, finding safety and an assured career across the Atlantic; he has a Communist mistress and a lusty young

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

servant girl at his disposal. But a mysterious destiny links him to Shosha, who dies as they leave Warsaw before the Nazis, an event reported only in brief retrospect.

Even in summary, this sequence lacks realistic plausibility. Aaron's friends find his commitment to Shosha incomprehensible, and he simply accepts it as a fact of experience. His account of his marriage, partly because of its literal unpersuasiveness, makes the reader reach for hidden meanings, yet it defies systematic allegorical interpretation. Singer's propensity for relying on large, undefined significance has often weakened his fiction, and it does so here. But the vividness of detail, once more, rescues it. If we cannot quite believe in Shosha's profound meaning as, say, an image of Jewish culture in decline, we can yet hardly fail to respond to the imaginative energy with which she is realized as a fictional creation. "All motivations in fiction are either obvious or false," Aaron finds occasion to say. *Shosha* does not describe organized causality; it re-creates a world. Aaron says that he marries Shosha because she's the only woman he trusts. Earlier he has observed that her innocent dwelling in the past seems to stop the passage of time. He trusts Shosha because she holds on to his past, their mutual past; the novel holds on to and revivifies a personal and a cultural past. When Singer writes, "My face filled with beard," alluding to the embrace of a hirsute friend, he captures not only an experience but a perspective: the comic, compelling distortions by which each individual perceives his world, his culture. The novel thrives on repeated small captures.

In fact its memories have little explicit connection with the Second World War. Hitler amounts to a background menace through much of the action, never occupying center stage. A powerful paradox informs the novel: one best preserves the historical past by assuming it, not by attempting to reconstitute it. "This novel does not represent the Jews of Poland in the pre-Hitler years by any means," a preliminary authorial note explains. "It is a story of a few unique characters in unique circumstances." It is, in other words, a novel: as novel it tells its story, as novel it conveys its larger truth, not "representing" the Jews of Poland but suggesting their individual, and thus ultimately their social, reality.

No one else can do what Singer does, infusing the flavor of folk mythology into twentieth-century narration. *Shosha* sets a high standard of imaginative power, by which other novels seem vividly inadequate. Stefan Kanfer writes with linguistic competence, narrative skill, and extensive historical knowledge. "He has long been involved," the dust jacket confides, "in the investigation and rehabilitation of Nazi victims." Lavish quotations from historical records of the fate of the Gypsies lard *The Eighth Sin*, whose protagonist wishes to rehabilitate himself as Nazi victim partly by avenging himself on the collaborator who brought death to many of his people in the concentration camp. Benoit, like Aaron, becomes an artist, a commercially successful painter of pictures. A survivor of the Nazis, he spends his late boyhood in New York, adopted by benevolent Jews who try in vain to provide him with a new culture and world view. New York treats him with remarkable benignity; even his incarceration in a penal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

institution after a youthful career of thievery leaves few scars. His current life demands little of him; he can pursue, therefore, his obsession with the past, which focuses in his insistence on locating the archetypal criminal figure from that past. Along the way he marries a beautiful blonde who proves unable to bear him children. For a time they care for a foster child, Daniel, to whom Benoit addresses the account which constitutes the novel. For a time Benoit lapses into alcoholism, but he pulls himself together long enough to perform the ritual murder he has long contemplated.

Two kinds of novel vie for dominance within the text. Kanfer has obvious serious intent, a message for the world and a need to impart it; insistent statements of significance mark the novelistic claim of "importance." But other clues remind us that the novel also wants to sell itself, its writer full of slick story-teller instincts. The "serious" intent displays itself often in appallingly pretentious prose: "Pioneers of dying, explorers of torment. The coffin lid of night decorated with cold constellations. Faces wracked with agnostic sobs. Why hast thou forsaken faces? Tears are orphans. Stacks spitting cinders. Smoke holding souls." This sort of writing can go on forever; fortunately it doesn't. The story-teller takes over from time to time, elaborating the irresistible plot of the chase. We are offered a vaguely sinister, infinitely wise French ex-nun, with her own file of atrocities (she ends up a murder-victim herself); streetcorner glimpses of the villain supposed to be dead; false clues and true ones, a detailed murder scene and a surprise ending. None of it quite works, perhaps because of competition from the serious thinker's musing on past horrors.

Unlike Singer, Kanfer appears to construe the obligation to remember in superficial and literal terms. The novelist evidently shares with his character a conviction that one must recollect and reiterate the horrors of Nazi inhumanity in order imaginatively to atone for them. As many commentators have observed, part of the horror resides in the impossibility of imagining it; the statistics and eye-witness accounts and recapitulations—substance of the interpolated quotations—appal but do not finally persuade. The character of Benoit, in this fictional version of events, should generate the ultimate persuasion: through him, *in* him, we might glimpse obliquely what the Nazis really did to the Gypsies. The true enterprise of this novel is to generate such conviction, but its confusion of tactics prevents it from doing so. Memory necessitates action, in one version of things: the plot implies that we need not know precisely *what* Benoit remembers, only *that* he does. He kills because he remembers, murder the final memorial. On the other hand, the cloudy prose of the protagonist's reflections suggests an opposite conclusion. Memory generates language and more language. As a disciple of Dulness explains in the fourth book of Pope's *Dunciad*, "For thee [we] explain a thing till all men doubt it, And write about it, Goddess, and about it." The more Benoit writes about the suffering of memory, the less we believe in its reality. Lacking Singer's gift for evocative detail, Kanfer seems at an ever-increasing distance from his subject. Unable to make his memories ours, his protagonist berates us with misery, yet allows us to interest ourselves more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in what he does than what he feels. The surprise plot revelation at the very end testifies to the bankruptcy of the literary endeavor. It consists of an essential item of information which the narrator has hitherto withheld—for no convincing human reason, only for purposes of literary artifice. A writer who manipulates a character in this way abandons real claim to seriousness; despite the importance of the subject, one finally feels just that.

The utter predictability of Suzanne Prou's novel, old-fashioned in conception and structure although marked by an up-to-date stylistic spareness, accounts for much of its undeniably limited appeal. A modern morality tale, *La Belle Edmée* recounts the sexual career of a woman whose coming of age coincides with the arrival of the Germans in France. Alienated from her bourgeois parents, Edmée finds increasing freedom after her mother dies. Her father cannot or will not keep track of his fifteen-year-old daughter; only some years later, after her notoriety is well-established, does he learn of her sexual and political misdeeds. The story emerges in the voice—most of the time indistinctly defined—of a girlhood friend of Edmée's, who re-encounters her late in life. As a girl, Edmée patronized her because of her sexual inexperience; as an aging woman, the sexual expert no longer claims explicit superiority. She has used her body successfully as her means of advancement, sleeping with Nazis, participating in sinister right wing activities, winning stockings and butter and security. But naturally she ends up old and ravaged and unhappy, "dragging her useless old hide about," and of course her son rejects her in favor of a radical young woman whose values precisely reverse his mother's, and it follows that the narrator will come to understand through Edmée the futility of self-exploitation and play-acting.

The relation between acting, in the theatrical sense, and remembering provides the novel's most compelling theme. In her painful late middle age, Edmée lives on memories of her distant past, recalling childhood dreams and what pass for realities. She speaks of her father, a military man, recalling him as an "invincible chevalier galloping to the sound of martial music," regretting the loss of this version of manhood; finally she replaces her dreams of her father with dreams of her son. But the narrative has demonstrated her inability to perceive either man distinctly. Understanding others in terms of the roles they invent for themselves or allow her to impose on them, she can grasp her own nature only through acting successive parts, chosen for her by fashion or circumstance. Even actualities convert themselves to theater. Fleeing Paris, she and her father see wounded men on stretchers, burning cities crowded with refugees, "ashen-faced runaways, soldiers with no rifles." She engraves these images on her memory; they teach her the necessity of taking care of herself to avoid a comparable fate. Her self-preservation depends, she believes, on acting: particularly her favorite part of femme fatale. If she looks more like a circus lion-tamer than an Amazon in her earliest incarnation, the fact testifies only to her uncertainties of taste; later she will control her self-presentation more successfully. Her father cannot help her align herself with the real because he too dwells in images, insisting on his own

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"memory" of Edmée as "an innocent, a dove, an easy prey for vultures." Neither he nor she can learn from experience, neither can profit from memory, because not memory or experience tells them anything about the world outside themselves. Our final glimpse of Edmée shows her making herself up before a mirror for one last part, recalling the tragic heroines she admired in girlhood. The narrator feels compelled by the terrible figure. "Motionless, and as if hallucinated, I was watching her; I was waiting for her to start declaiming her part, and I was ready to feed her the reply, to be the humble supernumerary, the supporting actor, the nameless walk-on . . ." In fact, Edmée wants no supporting actors, only audience for her self-dramatization. The novel ends with her tragic self-summary, glorification of her misery through insistence on its totality.

The final view of Edmée possesses more power than any other single moment in the novel. Image rather than action, it epitomizes the static aspect of this sort of story. Recent fiction often comes to ineffective conclusions, unable to resolve dramatic tension in meaningful event; the best endings, like that of *La Belle Edmée*, often provide a moment of vision instead of a conclusive action. *Action*, in the fundamental Aristotelian sense, appears difficult to imagine. *La Belle Edmée*, relying on an old and familiar narrative pattern, avoids realization of any genuine action at all; its sense of remoteness and irrelevance derives partly from this fact. Remoteness and irrelevance, of course, constitute the novel's subject—but a subject fundamentally unconfronted by the narrative. Commitment to memory, or to attempts at memory, sometimes evades the immediate: a form of letting go, then, rather than of holding on. *La Belle Edmée*, with its conventional yet elusive protagonist, drops readily from the reader's mind, an evasive record of evasion.

Memory as commitment—Singer's subject; memory as provocation to action—Kanfer's; memory as evasion. And the impossibility of accurate memory, a subject dealt with not in the war novels but in the increasingly surrealistic account of *The Changeling*, which retreats altogether from the public realm into a self-indulgent phantasmagoria of privacy. The ambiguities of its plot reflect its explicit insistence on the hopelessness of attempts to know. Pearl, the protagonist, twenty years old at the outset, has trouble discerning meaning in her experience. "Nothing in her life had prepared Pearl for significance. Each moment that occurred lay mute within her, a buried stone, contained from and irrelevant to herself, an event with neither premonition nor consequence." Moreover, she cannot remember properly. "Everything happened so long ago. It had always been the past she had tried to remember, but she'd found that the past changes like everything else. It doesn't stay the same." Edmée's propensity for acting destroys her past; Pearl's interest in story creates the protean shapes of hers. Around her, others invent, remember, enact disturbing stories. Her own life follows a plot whose outlines she cannot grasp. Once she married, once she bore a child. She flees her husband, who follows her to Miami; he dies in a subsequent plane crash, but the infant survives. Alternately, the baby is replaced in the hospital after the crash by an alien being, the changeling of the title: Pearl on the whole

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prefers this version. She lives with her husband's brother and an ever-changing collection of children on a strange island. She does not understand the people among whom she lives, nor does the reader—for whom, however, it hardly matters, so contrived are characters and happenings alike. The stories the children tell, which gradually come to control reality, concern human beings and animals and the relation between them, a matter which also preoccupies Pearl, given to wondering about how men evolve from lower forms or vice versa. It's all a problem of appearance and reality—a problem college sophomores typically discover with wonder as a fertile device for filling up their essays about philosophy, history, literature, just about anything. Joy Williams has the genuine sophomoric vision. "The meaningless hazards of life. The world that slumbered beneath the world of appearance that was the same world, both painful and boring at once, savage and playful, radiant and hideous, benignant and inspired. . . ."

Pearl may have problems about significance, but, as these quotations suggest, the novel's narrator feels no shyness about offering frequent overblown announcements of meaning. Lavish statements about story, memory, appearance, the changeability of the past, prepare for the ambiguous ending, in which either all the children turn to animals and kill the grown-ups or Pearl goes crazy and believes this to have happened. The novel has proceeded from the flat, tough, Joan Didion-ish prose of its early sequences ("Gene had spooned green jello between her legs. It was lime jello made with crushed pineapple. Pearl had made it in a butterfly mold and it was quite tasty. They'd had it for supper and Gene was having it now.") to a dreary unpunctuated stream of consciousness ("Death's a wagon rolling down the boardwalk Pearl's not going to get on that old wagon are you Pearl no there's no need we'll plant potatoes in the spring Peter can make vodka it's easier on the stomach ohh she thinks that's funny isn't that funny Pearl yes it's true manatees think they're mermaids because the sailors told them so"). The stylistic shift corresponds to the change in focus from outer to inner events, but like Kanfer's apparent uncertainty about whether to tell a good story or to insist on his message, it also reflects unsure novelistic purpose. Neither memory nor imagination, *The Changeling* insists, tells the truth; the arbitrariness of fictional technique reflects the arbitrariness of meaning. Memory here makes nothing permanent; the absence of belief in the possibility of even personal preservation of the past—what person? what past?—expresses itself in a novel which, despite its cloudy grandiosity, constantly reminds us that novels don't, can't, matter.

A larger sense of history may generate more hopeful fiction, but provides no insurance against tedium. Two recent novels attempt to link individually-imagined characters with the sweep of American social history: an admirable enterprise with uncertain fictional results.[5] *Time in Its Flight* broadcasts its central preoccupation in its title. The novel as an act

[5] TIME IN ITS FLIGHT, by *Susan Fromberg Schaeffer*. Doubleday. $12.95; A WOMAN OF INDEPENDENT MEANS, by *Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey*. Viking. $9.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of historical reconstruction attempts to reverse the course of time, to make enduring what the years make evanescent; the novel's important characters more or less consciously try to accomplish comparable ends with briefer time-spans. Dr. John Steele, a central figure, understanding time's destructiveness both from medical and domestic experience, interests himself in photography as a mode of stopping time. His images interpret as well as record; the novel suggests, finally, a view of memory as interpretation and of interpretation, the attribution of meanings, as the essential act of preservation.

This massive book—782 pages—bears a family resemblance to many other fictionalized accounts of the American past. Its obsessive historicity becomes wearing as the author demonstrates how thoroughly she has done her homework, incorporating quotations from old magazines, insisting on how things looked, how they worked, precisely what resources—domestic, medical, commercial—a nineteenth-century family would find available. Despite all her exactness, her rural Vermont does not live like Singer's Warsaw; it informs the intellect more fully than the imagination. And the meticulous account of a family's individual and collective experience almost inevitably creates a certain tedium. So many births, deaths, illnesses, love affairs: the reader begins to feel the limitations rather than the variety of human possibility. Half a novel would feel better. Interest in the individual characters cannot compensate for the inherent boredom of insistent but largely unrealized detail.

The monumental scale of *Time in Its Flight* emphasizes its pursuit of permanence. Only by the recovery of fragments, it insists, only by the valuing of minutiae, can one declare the importance each individual life possesses. Such valuing belongs by long social tradition to women, guardians of daily detail; this fiction celebrates the female, its important characters, except for Dr. Steele, all women. At the story's center is Edna Dickinson, who as a young girl in retreat from her impossible mother decides to marry the doctor, then proceeds to comfort, manipulate, and understand him through a long, rich life together. Although they suffer the normal vicissitudes of domestic experience, the narrative leaves the impression that nothing really bad ever can happen to them; impregnability defines their mode of being. To say so suggests an imaginative inadequacy of the novel: we are clearly intended to believe, for example, in the horror for the parents of losing a daughter who wanders out into the snow and freezes to death after her own husband and children have died in an epidemic. But the monotony of tone and the rapidity of event caused by the sheer chronological scope of the narrative (1860s to 1960s), interfere with emotional conviction. Edna's shock and grief over her daughter's death, seen as in stereopticon slides, accurate and contrived, remain palpably creations of fictional artifice.

The enterprise of stopping time of course implies artifice, a profoundly anti-natural activity. John's photographs convert the figures of the newly-baptized into images of death; they preserve the dead by showing what their survivors have never seen in them. Interference with the course of time, a human prerogative, belongs not only to artists but to talkers. Edna

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

talks a good deal about the nature of time and of memory, which she understands as a form of artistry. One can rearrange things in space but not in time, she observes, adding that our minds, however, have power to accomplish even chronological realignment. "Rearranging events of the past and present" might lead to insanity, John thinks, but Edna protests: "memory does that, for everyone." She thinks of time as "some kind of immovable thing. We walk through it, but it's like the water for the flowers. . . . Then the water gets to be too much for us, or it does something to our skin, like overwatering plants, like poison, and it kills us, or it can't get through to our roots because something of us freezes in us, the way roots do in the ground, and that's why we die." Everyone who hears this kind of talk from Edna appears, unaccountably, to admire it; the author evidently intends it to be taken seriously. At any rate, it demands attention for the philosophic problem which this novel loudly announces, the problem of humanity's relation to time. The past, John says earlier, is necessarily beautified by memory. "The further away things move, the more beautiful they get. No matter how ugly they were at the time. Memory: there must be something, a kind of chemical or gas that's part of it, that envelops what happened, no matter what it was, so that just the passing of time, just because of that, what is over and done becomes beautiful." A whiff of the sophomore paper hovers also about this proclamation of the overwhelming earnestness of the novelistic enterprise.

However irritating its "philosophy," however tedious its accumulation of fact and pseudo-fact, *Time in Its Flight* possesses undeniable power derived partly from its relentless accumulation. Forcing the reader into a kind of total immersion, enveloping us in the created and remembered world of our ancestors, it generates moments of unexpected emotion. No one ever talked, we may conclude, as these people talk; nonetheless, we listen. John's deathbed scene offers a case in point. Ella, Edna's grown-up daughter, insists that her mother must allow John to die. "You're being selfish . . . ; he's staying alive for your sake. It's torture for him. You have to let him go; you have to tell him you'll be all right. You'll have to lie and say you'll be happy. You have to do it." Implausible enough; but implausibility intensifies as Edna responds with a "whispered" discourse on time. "In this unfair world—enjoying something is believing in its permanence. Nothing permanent was meant for time; nothing. That's the word to time's one song: nothing." Yet when Edna and John have their final conversation, in the context of Ella's accusation of selfishness and of Edna's immediate and past reflections on time's destructiveness and the human need to defy it, that talk—composed partly of trivial memories, partly of Edna's lying protestations, partly of John's poignant insistence that "you were life"—has acquired the resonance of a lifetime which the reader has vicariously experienced. Schaeffer takes memory with utter seriousness, as subject and as technique. The sheer doggedness of her approach, as far as possible from Singer's exuberant recapitulation, wins dignity if not excitement for her narrative.

A Woman of Independent Means suffers by comparison, supplying a shrunken and superficial version of a similar literary undertaking. Hailey

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

takes on many fewer characters and a briefer time-span (roughly 1900–1960); she returns to the conventions of the epistolary novel, allowing her protagonist to tell her own story, from childhood to old age, in a series of letters to relatives and friends. Even on its own terms, the novel seems uncomfortably slight and unnervingly theoretical. To be sure, it makes no great effort at philosophic profundity (that's a relief); it has no such stylistic pretensions as *The Changeling*. On the contrary, its protagonist reveals an utterly commonplace mind with a few up-to-date ideas given interest by being attributed to someone for whom they are historically relatively unlikely. The theoretical aspect of the fiction emerges in its conception of character. Bess Steed Garner, twice married but long widowed between marriages, does things not by the laws of psychology but on the basis of some notion about what a truly "liberated" woman would be like. She acts unfailingly out of some idea of independence, lacking emotional complexity and imaginative conviction. Even as a young woman, she lends rather than gives her husband money, receiving a note of hand in return; when he dies, at the age of twenty-nine, she readily assumes many of his business responsibilities. But no moment of convincing feeling, no evocation of genuine conflict, no real experienced difficulty even though difficulties are unconvincingly asserted (never communicated) mars the smooth course of Bess's career. The epistolary convention relieves the novelist of the obligation to write compelling prose (it didn't unburden Samuel Richardson of stylistic obligation—but of course conventions are different now); socio-political clichés relieve her of the necessity to imagine complexly. Her fiction sounds like instructive reminiscences from a women's magazine: "I was terrified of losing Arthur as a friend when I refused him as a husband, but the letter I received from him today was so warm and understanding I think our relationship may even profit from the experience."

This novel would seem too negligible to warrant serious discussion except that it reveals rather startlingly how certain social assumptions inform literature at every level of sophistication. Like the other protagonists we have encountered, Bess offers her reflections about time, memory, and art—rather primitive in articulation and conception, but nonetheless familiar. A friend sends her a blank book as a wedding present. She responds with a rhapsody about the inferior satisfaction of living a life compared to writing about it. Hence, she continues, her pleasure in producing letters. "Somehow by compressing and editing the events of my life, I infuse them with a dramatic intensity totally lacking at the time, but oddly enough I find that years later what I remember is not the event as I lived it but as I described it in a letter. I find the very act of writing turns fact into fiction and for that I thank God with all my heart." The embarrassing imprecision of this account—"dramatic intensity" is conspicuously lacking in Bess's narrative—may obscure the significance of its presence: talk about such ideas (art transforms memory; memory, art) has become a cliché available to even the crudest sensibility.

In the nineteenth century, bad and good fiction alike relied on moral

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

truisms which novelistic characters supported or defied with more or less predictable consequences. Current fiction rests on epistemological or aesthetic truisms which serve comparable organizing functions. The secular salvation of memory provides a pretext for fictional structures as once the notion of moral growth dictated novelistic strategy. In George Eliot's work, the possibility of moral growth underlay complex character development: Maggie Tulliver grows but dies, no earthly reward attending her ethical struggle. But lesser Victorian novelists (Charlotte Yonge, for example) employed the same idea for simpler purposes, creating fictions in which goodness and happiness inevitably coincide. Just so, now, with the notion of memory. For Isaac Singer, in *Shosha*, the human dependence on preservation of the past generates intricate and unpredictable responses in the protagonist; in *A Woman of Independent Means*, memory (embodied in the act of writing things down) simply solves human problems. The idea of memory as aesthetic and intellectual resource rescues fiction-writers from the abyss of the meaningless, implying no specific obligation to judge or to act in particular ways, only the need to recall and record.

Yet memory can have its own morality. Writers who take it seriously, as discipline rather than indulgence, demonstrate its rigors, its pains, and its moral resources. Peter Handke makes marvelous fictional use of the experiential truth that we recall such trivia as the clothes people wear far more vividly than we recapture past feelings.[6] The sense of strangeness which energizes *The Left-Handed Woman* derives paradoxically from a kind of super-realism, rigorous adherence to surface "factuality" rendered in sparse and literal prose. Any summary of events in the novel falsifies: the events live in the tonality of their presentation, flat, unemphatic—and terrifying. A woman tells her husband that she knows he will leave her, so he must leave. Without argument, he departs. She lives alone with her little boy. She buys groceries, she translates, once she throws her typewriter on the floor, she watches her son and his fat friend. Occasionally she sees other people: her husband, her publisher, an actor, a woman friend. At the end of the novel, she rocks in a rocking chair. Almost nothing happens; certainly nothing is resolved; emotions and conflicts express themselves only in submerged form; conversations follow oblique and unaccountable paths; the fictional statement asserts no definable meaning. The happenings of the book sound trivial when abstracted from their novelistic expression, but utterly compelling in the text. The malignancies of fact dominate the narrative, even in tender moments. Mother and son climb a mountain together, sit on the summit and talk:

> After a while she said, "Once you sat by the sea like this, looking at the waves for hours. Do you remember?"
>
> The child: "Of course I remember. It was getting dark, but I didn't want to go. You and Bruno were angry because you wanted to go back to the hotel. You were wearing a green skirt and a white blouse with

[6] THE LEFT-HANDED WOMAN, by *Peter Handke*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $7.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lace cuffs, and a wide hat that you had to hold on to because the wind was blowing. There weren't any shells on that beach, only round stones."

The woman: "When you start remembering, I'm always afraid you'll confound me with something I did long ago."

The reported memories contain no sinister detail, but the woman's fear of being "confounded" by her own past actions infects the reader. The uncontrollability of the past becomes as vivid a fact as that of the future, and past and future appear objects of knowledge (and of ignorance) in similar ways. Thus the woman's conviction that her husband will leave her, although no shred of reported evidence supports it, has the status of observed phenomenon. "For a moment I saw my future clearly and it chilled me to the bone," the protagonist says, late in the novel. We do not know what she sees, or how, but we believe that she sees, and that what she sees will become truth. The novel insists on perception: of plastic bags skittering across the pavement, cars in garages, small boys triumphantly saying *shit* and *piss*, lonely women walking dogs, people looking like other people, people saying arbitrary things ("By God, love still exists!" "The child is sleeping"), missing buttons, mailboxes and light bulbs. It neither glorifies nor celebrates perception, only adheres to it. Memory is perception, in this narrative; so is prophecy; so, indeed, is narrative itself, eschewing clear motive or meaning, accepting the arbitrariness of the actual.

The author's willingness to relinquish so much—plot, in its old meanings, metaphor, causality, stated significance—generates in the reader a new mode of suspended disbelief. Claiming little for itself, the fiction demands assent for its remnants of observation. And gradually those remnants assume astounding authority, reverberating with implication. "She stretched out her arms. There was a hole in her sweater, under one armpit; she stuck her finger into it." That hole possesses no specific symbolic signification; the woman stretches her arms for no particular reason. Yet in the absence of interpretation supplied or facilitated by the text, the gesture, the flaw, seem immensely, mysteriously, portentous. Small things, the novel suggests, make lives. Taking each individual item with ultimate seriousness, allowing no hierarchy of importance, it implies the absolute value of the actual, the morality of memory as acceptance of reality, even though the notion of reality itself may constitute only a contrivance.

Handke's stripped prose, skeletal plot, denuded characters (the protagonist has a name—Marianne—but usually appears as "the woman"; she receives few identifying marks of personality or appearance) evoke a world in which every object, every gesture speaks of pain; and the fictional structure itself attests the pain as well as the necessity of fully acknowledging objects and gestures. Less explicit than other works in its concern with the aesthetics of memory, it powerfully exemplifies the resources of such an aesthetics.

Achieving comparable effects by sharply different means, V. S. Prit-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chett's collection of stories demonstrates that less contemporary techniques can also convey the inherent value of recognizing the world around one.[7] The short story form adapts itself peculiarly well to the evocation of revelatory surfaces. Pritchett's unsensational short pieces, unlike Handke's somewhat longer fiction (*The Left-Handed Woman* is hardly more than short-story length: eighty-seven widely-spaced pages), dwell often on feelings as well as furniture, cars, clothing, and revealing small actions. Their form characteristically emphasizes the *pastness* of the experience they imagine. Typically, a story consists of a reminiscence by a man looking back on his early life, to report, for example, his youthful sexual initiation in Paris or his unwitting implication in a man's decision to leave his wife. But the life of the narrative seems oddly peripheral to its announced subject. The tale of sexual initiation dwells not only on the young man's feelings of inadequacy and ignorance but on the older woman's ways of dealing with her husband and on the power of story to resolve psychic tension; the account of Noisy Brackett leaving his wife generates intense interest in the emotions of the narrator's mother. Of course the effect of such diffuse narrative structure is to suggest the inconceivability of peripheries: as in Handke's world, everything becomes central as soon as looked at.

The past, these stories demonstrate, is what we look at; and the future, once more, bears an unnerving resemblance to it. At the end of the third in a group of stories about Noisy Brackett, a feckless and impecunious racing driver, the narrator implicitly acknowledges that he has lost all hope of possessing Mrs. Brackett, object of his lust and devotion. Although both Noisy and his wife apparently feel interested in the narrator, a young baker, events have revealed their far more fundamental preoccupation with one another. Bob, the baker, has no real woman in his life (he has been engaged briefly to an aristocrat and has had a fling with Mrs. Brackett), only the cardboard image of an airline hostess, previously Noisy's. He breaks it up and throws it away. Then the story ends:

> Mother said nothing, but once or twice she goes on about the future—the usual thing. "If you knew what was going to be you'd act differently," she says. "People ought to tell you, then you'd know," she says. And then she gets on to Teddy Longfellow saying there isn't any future, and I tell her I agree with him. A few weeks ago, Heading [the Bracketts' house] came up for sale. Mother says the class of trade is changing in our town.

Even as the protagonist denies the future, it comes upon him: the class of trade is changing, will change. You never know what will happen: nobody tells you. In another sense, you know all too well: what the Bracketts have done forever predicts what they will do; Bob's inability to act differently foretells a long series of "cardboard" girls in his experience. The abrupt shift from past to present tense in the final paragraph has a startling effect,

[7] SELECTED STORIES, by *V. S. Pritchett*. Random House. $10.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

emphasizing the essential lack of distinction between past and present, present and future. Human beings dwell in a continuum which may be penetrated at any point with comparable results. A cross-section of a given life always looks roughly the same, however bizarre the events which may involve a character at a specific moment.

This description suggests in Pritchett considerably more commitment to causality than Handke manifests, and in fact Pritchett's universe does display an insistent logic quite foreign to Handke's. "When My Girl Comes Home," the longest and one of the best of the tales, studies the responses of a lower-class community to a woman returning from the Far East after the Second World War, twice widowed after marriages to an Indian and—shockingly—a Japanese, and still emphatically on the make. The story's interest inheres in the persistence with which everyone enacts himself or herself. The solidity and the revelatory possibility of selves assumes the place of the solidity and power of objects in Handke; again, the narrator's attentiveness, his insistence on the act of memory, creates the fiction's moral center. If the aesthetics of memory provides pretexts for self-indulgence, looseness, and incoherence, it can also dictate disciplined fictional structures. For Singer, Handke, and Pritchett, it does precisely this.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VERNON YOUNG

Poetry Chronicle: First, Second and Third Person—Singular

NEARLY FIVE HUNDRED PAGES OF THE ENGLISH AUDEN. Was there ever any other Auden? Neither citizenship nor residence can radically change a man's cultural nationality. (I riddle myself—the Swedish Young?) Obviously, Edward Mendelson's title comprises the Auden literature, which he has gathered, edited and introduced scrupulously, published up to 1939 when the poet arrived in the United States for a long visit.[1] In those days Auden deceived himself—as we all do—about the extent to which the foreign experience modified his diction or changed his outlook. That his development would have been very different had he remained in England or settled permanently in Austria is doubtful. More important than his New York domicile or his American college lecturing were the *war*, as universal calamity, his own changing chemistry and his vivacious experiments, inevitable anywhere, with poetic idiom. American residence sometimes determined locale in his poems, not his intellectual perspective. The usual assumption about poets (those who sustain their work for forty or more years) is that their late work is their best. What is remarkable here is how much that is vitally characteristic and forever quotable had been written before 1939: "Sir, no man's enemy. . . . "; "It is time for the destruction of error"; "Fleeing the short-haired mad executives"; "A shilling life will give you all the facts"; "Look, stranger, at this island now"; the brilliant, if uneven, *Letter to Lord Byron;* "The Novelist"; "The Composer"; "Epitaph on a Tyrant"; "Musée des Beaux Arts"; "In Memory of W. B. Yeats." Also contained in this volume are scores of reviews, lengthy essays, obiter Audeniana, none of which were included in *Forewords and Afterwords* (Vintage Books, 1974), a collection of his later review material. I confess that I find Auden's prose sermons on Marx, Freud, the Dictators and the British Public School System as tedious as the prefaces of G. B. S. Perhaps because he hated headmasters he never managed to suppress the headmaster in himself. His book reviews, though he had the summarizing art, are frustrating; so very often he failed to tell you what was *in the book* under review; instead, he launched a discourse of his own on the subject! Much of his strenuous defence of democracy was provoked, I have the feeling, by fright during those years, from c. 1933 onward, when we were all frightened—not by any kinship with an equalitarian ethos. When I met him *inside* a "social democracy" a year before he died, he expressed no warmth, indeed no curiosity, about the social premises of the host country. Among the prose pieces I do find durable are those on the subject of poetry. I may not be able to assume, in his own

[1] THE ENGLISH AUDEN: Poems, Essays & Dramatic Writings 1927–1939, edited by *Edward Mendelson*. Random House. $17.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

words about someone else, that he, too, "quietly surrounds our habits of thought," because many of my contemporaries are prepared to shelve his unquiet influence, but I can in all honesty say that he quietly surrounds *my* habits; while scrutinizing the other volumes for this review, I have found many of his reflections useful.

Few poets of our century are more remote, in practise, from W. H. Auden than Rainer Maria Rilke. Auden, even at his most personal, wrote third-person poetry; it is outwardly addressed, *eventful;* it is doctrinal poetry, in the best sense. No matter that his views on love or politics may not have been ours; he spoke to us about a world he shared with us. Rilke's poems are as removed as it is possible to imagine, while still retaining coherence, from the *contingencies* of existence. Images from history, theology or art were not intended to confront the reader with the event or the object for its own sake; they were annexed by the poet in order to be *transformed,* as he insisted in that by now often-quoted letter to his Polish translator. *"We are the bees of the invisible. We frantically plunder the visible of its honey, to accumulate it in the great golden hive of the invisible"* (David Young's translation).[2] Yet, by halting at a single poem or a single declaration of Rilke, we are unable satisfactorily to define the body of his verse so that it stays put within convenient category, for he wrote under such diverse influences, wore so many masks, that almost any assertion about him can be demonstrated in a context chosen by the critic. Michael Hamburger, who has fully confronted the scope and contradictions of Rilke's life and art, summarized the problem clearly (in *The Truth of Poetry,* Pelican Books, 1972, p. 109). "Rilke's extraordinary richness as a lyrical poet is inseparable from a 'negative capability,' a gift of empathy, which, outside his poems, led him into almost every conceivable absurdity." And inconceivable! These ineffable elegies which seem the very effluence of a soul apart, of the mind in its most disinterested yet passionate moments of discovery, were written, we know now, when, as deluded as anyone by the collapse of Europe and its sinister recovery under thug rule, he wrote those astounding letters to the Duchess Aurelia Gallarati-Siotti, praising the ultra-nationalism of Mussolini. Nothing could more emphatically remind us: *never* trust the Poet as Political Thinker. Which is what makes more attractive David Young's answer to a student who asked what the *Duino Elegies,* specifically, were *about:* "They are about what it really means to be human." Young's triadic-line translation is generally superb; if he rarely attains the musical purity of the original—I think English is not structured for *that* effect, any more than it is for *lieder*—he does convey the lilt, the intimate tone, the fugitive progression and the majestic metaphors.

You see
we don't love
a single season
like the flowers.
When we love
a sap

[2] DUINO ELEGIES, by *Rainer Maria Rilke,* translated by *David Young.* Norton. $8.85.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

older than time
rises through our arms.
My dear
it's like this:
that we love *inside* ourselves
not one person
not some future being
but seething multitudes
not a particular child
but the fathers
who lie at rest
in our depths
like ruined mountains
and the dry riverbeds
of earlier mothers
and the whole
soundless landscape
under the clouded
or clear sky
of its destiny
this, my dear
came before you.

from "Third Elegy"

Luis Cernuda (1902–63) may be seen to have resembled Rilke at one point of intersection and at one alone: as Reginald Gibbons, editor and translator of these poems,[3] puts it: the impossibilty "for him to regard natural phenomena as independent of the human observer. For him they must always be actions and entities whose significance is symbolic, casting an exemplary light back on human affairs." But the human affairs so illuminated—crepuscular, fitful—in Cernuda's verse were obsessively confined to the death of Spain and to his own exile. Every other phenomenon was forced into recapitulating the tragedy of his nation and from that tragedy the nature of everything else was deduced (as in Vallejo's case), including the nonexistence or the incomprehensibly perverse presence of God. Tormented by a demiurge in whom he didn't want to believe, he asked, in "Gulls in the Park,"

Why, having wings, are they the guests of smoke,
The foul streams in the parks, and wooden bridges?
Treacherous winds or some unconscious hand
Cast them inland, far from their native havens. . . .

the same question he asks in "Ruins":

O God, you who made us
For dying, why have you put this thirst
For eternity in us, that makes us poets?

[3] SELECTED POEMS, by *Luis Cernuda,* translated by *Reginald Gibbons.* University of California Press. $10.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Living in exile, permanently after 1938, Cernuda sings the inconsolable with a manic intensity that wrings the heart. Then, as we read back and forth, a sober misgiving chills our pity; before ever the Civil War wrote another chapter of blood into Spain's history, the poet, homosexual, as Gibbons informs us, "resolutely anti-authoritarian, anti-institutional and by the time he left Spain. . . . in essence politically inactive," would himself have spurned, with unrelenting Spanish hauteur, the syllables of our sympathy. He saw Europe as "A continent of hucksters and buffoons,/ Lying in ambush for this insane nation" and as early as 1935 he had rejected his fellowman in the gross with a scorn that takes the breath away.

> Listen to their marmoreal precepts
> On the useful, the normal, the beautiful
> Listen to them dictate law to the world, fix the norms
> of love, give rules for ineffable beauty . . .
>
> Attempting to raise, son by son, a complex edifice of sand
> Whose grim, livid facade would negate the refulgent
> peace of the stars. . . .
> "The Poet's Glory"

As far as I can make out from the facing-page Spanish, Reginald Gibbons has faithfully carried over the elegant colloquialism and rhetorical thrust of Cernuda's style; his notes to the poems, often explaining his choice of an idiom, are, like his introduction, lucid assistance, without which we would have small chance of understanding the full context of Cernuda's disdain and anguish.

When a poet has been unaccountably neglected for years (or accountably neglected, if he hasn't been translated), a compensatory over-rating of his merit is likely to follow. To his disciples, *over-rate* will be a fighting word. If I suggest that Basil Bunting is a notorious example, I mean that when on the jacket of this edition[4] Hugh Kenner is quoted as saying that "there is no better poet alive than Basil Bunting" and Hugh MacDiarmid (which doesn't surprise me) is quoted as believing that Bunting's poems "are the most important to have appeared in any form of the English language [with that obliquity he is plugging regional dialect] since T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land"* and *etcetera,* that, my friends and foes, is over-rating! Not even with W. S. Merwin, on this occasion, can I go along. "There is no one like him among English poets of our time." If Bunting gives the impression that he is unlike any other poet it is because as an expert imitator of Ezra Pound he sounds like no one else but Ezra Pound—which is, in a sense, cleverly to sound like everyone! In fact, he sometimes sounds like Hugh MacDiarmid or like David Jones and who read who first I wouldn't know. Bunting is a poet's poet; his powers of verbal impersonation, his condensations, elisions, sedulous aping of the classical Persian (which, stout fellow, he had taught himself in order to read its poetry), his Biblical voice, his Villon voice, his Qor'an voice, his updating of Horace

[4] COLLECTED POEMS, by *Basil Bunting*. Oxford University. $10.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and, after all these excursions, his return to the "Northumbrian": these are virtuoso feats which anyone trying to wring the neck of rhetoric is bound to envy. His special property is the panoramic survey in an exotic setting, moving from detail to detail until a close-up, so to speak, relates the setting to the ubiquitous eye, the omniscient speaker; like "The Oratava Road," which Richard Ellmann has anthologized, or like this passage from "The Spoil":

> Camels raise their necks from the ground,
> cooks scour kettles, soldiers oil their arms,
> snow lights up high over the north,
> yellow spreads in the desert, driving blue westward
> among banks, surrounding patches of blue,
> advancing in enemy land.
> Kettles flash, bread is eaten,
> scarabs are scurrying rolling dung.
> Thirty gorged vultures on an ass's carcass
> jostle, stumble, flop aside, drunk with flesh,
> too heavy to fly, wings deep with inner gloss.
> Lean watches, then debauch:
> after long alert, stupidity:
> waking, soar. If here you find me
> intrusive and dangerous, seven years was I bonded
> for Leah, seven toiled for Rachel:
> now in a brothel outside under the wall
> have paused to bait on my journey.
> Another shall pay the bill if I can evade it.

Bunting is impressive while I read him—not memorable: a great translator; when the voices of his brigands, waifs, airmen, pub-crawlers and tribesmen die away, the poet himself has been dissipated among his multilingual selves. That may be his intention. My feeling about his poetry is that it's all swagger and no wisdom.

Rodney Hall,[5] an Australian, is as little familiar to most of us, I daresay, as Basil Bunting. Until now, I knew him only as editor of an anthology of Australian poetry. His professional honors at home have taken him into international territory and these selected poems have been gleaned from eight volumes. No possibility, therefore, of my trying to write knowingly of his development or of how he relates to other Australian poets. From those I've read, I doubt that any level with him. He appears to favor the *sequence*, unified by a subject which is not imposed, but emerges; which argues a way of seeing things whole, or at least of their having a *connectedness*, the single personality, emotion, place or deed linked with another as the poet's consciousness perceives, develops and shapes a "progression" or a "contrary." He is very damn good and I can best ratify that brisk opinion by directly quoting him, in a necessarily limited attempt to illustrate his range. This characterization, "The Medieval," is part of a progression,

[5] SELECTED POEMS, by *Rodney Hall*. University of Queensland Press. $10.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The Molecule as Mosaic," the subject of which I'll risk defining as the revenges of history.

> His two concerns are siege defences
> and the men's obedience—those menforms
> satisfactorily turning totem heads his way
> (the badger, frog, the bear and pig)
> captive, as fear dictates it, in his mind.
>
> His mind becomes an eight-walled
> eight-towered threat. Fires
> on the crenellations sigh and snap,
> soot glows coral round the water cauldrons.
> Helmeted he stands, sharp nose showing
> and the mole between his eyes,
> *lips chewed raw by boys and women,*
> the wet steel chest, the ginger bristles
> ridged along each woodhard arm,
> bristles on the bullock-leather skirt.
>
> And ninety feet below him famine gapes,
> a thousand lordless peasants
> clamber to the buttresses. He nods,
> boiling water spreads to a sheet of armour
> down the walls, trailing feathered capes of steam.

I find that as vivid as Bunting, with less striving after syntactical warp. It was written before 1973. "The Owner of My Face," a group of sixty poems not previously published (dated 1973–74), is from another scheme altogether, a soliloquy in the form of an address to someone never specified, an eloquent private narrative that embraces a considerable montage of the "outside" world, together with undeceived concentrates like the following:

> Let's not bother questioning the fact—we're strangers.
> Only by the hope of all mankind we lie together
> only by surmounting native fear
> you let me move inside you and
> I let myself surrender to release:
> only because we've claimed the right to patience
> do we attempt to disentangle feelings into words
> challenging a history of ignorance and anger.
> For with no one but a stranger
> can we achieve the risk that keeps us human.

If I say that *The Shaft*[6] confirms but does not advance the high opinion of Charles Tomlinson which the attentive now have of him, that *is* praise; an acknowledgment on my part that I am fully satisfied with what he has

[6] THE SHAFT, by *Charles Tomlinson*. Oxford University. $2.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

already achieved. He is best known, I think, for poems that focus an aesthetic, initially *pictorial* vision of weathered settings and objects (old houses, marl-pits, meteorites), of seasonal moods noted in a tree, a field, a sky: creative strategy, this, whereby the fleeting appearance is given deceptive stability by the words that arrest it. His most articulate definition of this process (he is always intensively articulate) may be found in "A Meditation on John Constable," one of his major poems.[7]

> . . . . Facts. And what are they?
> He admired accidents, because governed by laws,
> Representing them (since the illusion was not his end)
> As governed by feeling. The end is our approval
> Freely accorded, the illusion persuading us
> That it exists as a human image. . . .

In his new volume there are many poems to which "our approval [is] freely accorded," intelligent, meditative poems wherein *observation* is always questioned as a *seeming,* and the poet's interpretations of birdsong, of a tree that moves, of clouds that suggest "the sway/Of sudden apocalypse, complete revelation," of spring light which makes the scar in a split tree pulsate—"You would swear that through the shuddered trunk/Still tremors the memory of its separation"—: these are quizzically called into question by the poet himself.

A less familiar Tomlinson, almost diametrically other from the discursive and equivocal naturist, is, in the latest collection, the brief biographer of Charlotte Corday, Danton, Marat and of the late Sir John Denham (1615–69), a fine pastiche, this, of period and personal diction. In the *Selected Poems,* some of Tomlinson's most astute cultural conclusions are embodied in his American poems. Readers may bridle at his view of the unreciprocal academy-life in "A Word in Edgeways" and in "A Dream"—"they hear me out who have not heard one word," but his "A Garland for Thomas Eakins," his New England and his Far west portraits should pluck a positively responsive chord. Since it is uncharacteristic of the Tomlinson verse I have treated above, I want to quote all of "At Barstow," a *tour de force*: the idiomatic felicity of its alliteration, the telling *caesurae,* the pace ("Rhythm," said Auden, "is what is expected by one word of another"), the spare but intermittently opulent speech.

> Nervy with neons, the main drag
> was all there was. A placeless place.
> A faint flavour of Mexico in the tacos
> tasting of gasoline. Trucks refuelled
> before taking off through space. Someone lived
> in the houses with their houseyards wired
> like tiny Belsens. The Götterdammerung
> would be like this. No funeral pyres, no choirs
> of lost trombones. An Untergang

[7] SELECTED POEMS, 1951–1974, by *Charles Tomlinson.* Oxford University. $4.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without a clang, without
a glimmer of gone glory
however dimmed. At the motel desk
was a photograph of Roy Rogers
signed. It was here
he made a stay. He did not
ride away on Trigger
through the high night, the tilted
Pleiades overhead, the polestar low, no
going off until
the eyes of beer-cans
had ceased to glint at him
and the desert darknesses
had quenched the neons. He was spent.
He was content. Down he lay.
The passing trucks controlled his sleep,
the shifting gears contrived
a muffled fugue against the fading of his day
and his dustless, undishonoured stetson rode
beside the bed,
glowed in the pulsating, never-final twilight
there, at that execrable conjunction
of gasoline and desert air.

Zbigniew Herbert,[8] the most erudite of postwar Polish poets, found in America no such folkloristic hint to quicken his imagination, if the poem, "Sequoia," is representative. Glumly, Herbert gazes at the exposed tree-rings of a giant redwood, labelled by the Park Service to indicate corresponding events in history, from the Battle of Hastings to the Normandy landings; he ends his melancholy perusal of this display by remarking:

the Tacitus of this tree was a geometrician and he did not know
adjectives
he did not know syntax expressing terror he did not know any
words
therefore he counted added years and centuries as if to say there
is nothing
beyond birth and death nothing only birth and death
and inside the bloody pulp of the sequoia.

This humorless verdict points to a regrettable tendency in Herbert's latest work, the tendency to find easy targets, to select inappropriate or facile opportunities for exercising a sentiment he believes to be sardonic but which may well be merely sarcastic or arch. The poet, himself, supplied the *as if* above; the forestry official had no obligation to "express terror"! Herbert's earlier monologues of bitterness, above all "Soliloquy of For-

[8] SELECTED POEMS, by *Zbigniew Herbert,* translated and introduced by *John Carpenter* and *Bogdana Carpenter.* Oxford University. $6.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tinbras," conspicuously influenced by Cavafy, were marvellous so long as their ironic temper was close to the Polish tragedy when this was more immediate in his mind. Irony can become a glib reflexive device when it is no longer grounded in the actualities supporting an emotion which needs to be deflected because it is unbearable otherwise. Many of the poems and prose anecdotes in this new selection are too easy—I mean their *conceptions* are too easy: the inadequacy of knowledge to experience; the contrast between St. George's visible dragon and the impalpable monster sought by "Mr. Cogito," the aesthetic spectacle of Iphigenia's sacrifice, contrived by the poet in order to ridicule it; the failure of virtue to "become/the bride/of real men—of generals/secretaries of state/prosecutors."

Perplexed by the translators' underlining of Herbert as a "supreme ironist," I resort to the touchstone method. In Anthony Hecht's *Millions of Strange Shadows* is a poem, "Apprehensions," which summons half a lifetime of incisive memories, the mundane mingling with the ecstatic and, informing it all, the figure of a German governess who appears, disappears, reappears in dream, until she merges with the great catastrophe of our century. Herbert sets one image or concept against another which contradicts it and his poem is done. Hecht composes, here as elsewhere, an intricate form in which irony is not the sole reward, for it is enriched by diversions and linguistic subtleties which are more than half the reason for rereading the poem countless times. Herbert's translators claim he is a poet "of powerful, expressive structures." I see no evidence of it in these poems. I see *other* victories: a nimble command of metaphor, a creative effort to recover the *usable* past of history and art, an abiding spirit of compassion for and kinship with the defeated, as in poems about his brother or a former professor or those "who return to the ruins not to claim the dead/but to recover the pipe of an iron stove/starved—loving life/beaten on the face—loving life. . . . "[9]

The influence of early Herbert but even more of Tadeusz Rozewicz (Herbert's contemporary in age), who insisted, in a poem now employed to define him, that his poetry "interprets nothing/explains nothing/renounces nothing," clings to several contemporary Polish poets collected in a publication[10] which, for the reader unacquainted with Polish verse, *must* be accompanied by the indispensable *Post-War Polish Poetry*, edited by Czeslaw Milosz, 1965. Not that the younger generations share Rozewicz's blank disillusion or Herbert's sombre practice of attributing postwar casuistry to characters of the Classical ages. What they *have* inherited, if I am not mistaken, is a *habit* of disenchantment which imposes a flippant romanticism, fearful of commitment. Unable to fake a tragedy they didn't experience on their pulses, suspended in a Socialism without nourishment, the newer poets offer a curious conformity of non-conformism, a shunning of time, place and communion, a brittle solipsism and the same kind of histrionic synthesis one sees in their popular "poster art" and in

[9] I am baffled by the Carpenters' contention that Zbigniew Herbert is difficult to translate into English. I recall that Czeslaw Milosz found him one of the easiest to translate!

[10] THE NEW POLISH POETRY, A Bilingual Collection compiled and edited by *Milne Holton* and *Paul Vangelisti*. University of Pittsburgh Press. $4.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their theatre. This much I infer from the tone which, translated by many editors in this collection, is common to more than a few of the poets. Fully to understand why would require a visit to Poland longer than a charter-flight stay in Warsaw.

The remainder are American. Which public library would not pay fourteen dollars and a half, less discount, for a volume that contains, according to its publisher, "nearly 800 poetic masterpieces," all-American?[11] Somewhat more modest is the claim of Nancy Sullivan, who chose the contents. "Not every poem in this anthology is a jewel in the literal sense, but each one, verbal emerald as well as verbal opal, has its intrinsic quality and character. Collectively they shape a unique and haphazard crown for a monarchless country." I deduce that her introduction was intended for 1976 publication, to celebrate 200 years of unique and haphazard independence. If I were to follow a prevailing current of American opinion—that a complete psychological and moral transformation takes place with every change of presidency—I might conclude that the policy reflected in this volume (from Ann Bradstreet to Nikki Giovanni, including *ninety* pages of Walt Whitman, beside everybody else and few surprises) is symptomatic of the Carter administration, under which dropouts, doodlers, Calibans and Wasps are alike first-class citizens. There is often a question as to whether choice in these matters is individual or conventional. If we ask who needs this anthology to replace Ellmann and O'Clair's Norton Anthology of 1973 (the main selective lines of which it closely follows) the most feasible answer is that Doubleday hopes to sell it—judging from the English of Nancy Sullivan's overture, to high-school students. The Ellmann collection embraced *Modern Verse in English,* and with its abundant notes and biographies compelled attention to the diverse international sources (and the resistance to them) of twentieth-century poetry. The reader of the Sullivan Treasury can make his way undistracted by transatlantic or transpacific reminders that English poetry is written on other continents. Perhaps the most tolerant frame of mind in which to receive such a collection, uninformed as it is by any overview save the patriotic, is to hope that an innocent who can't tell a verbal emerald from a verbal opal will find for himself some authentic jewel devoid of paste which will for him advance the cause of poetry.

Hello, Darkness is a memorial volume for L. E. Sissman, compiled by Peter Davison who felt properly sympathetic with a friend and fellow-poet writing his last poems in the shadow of certain death.[12] Circumstances of this sort are for ever an embarrassment to impartial criticism, since personal tragedy cannot be counted upon to confer poetic merit, as Davison himself, having written a score of distinctive poems on the subject of death, should be the first to recognize and regret. Davison and Hilton Kramer (whose appreciation of Sissman is amply quoted on the wrapper) are of the same mind: that the poet was unfairly subordinated to

[11] THE TREASURY OF AMERICAN POETRY, selected and introduced by *Nancy Sullivan.* Doubleday. $14.50.

[12] HELLO, DARKNESS, The Collected Poems of L. E. Sissman, edited and with a preface by *Peter Davison.* Atlantic Monthly Press. $9.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other reputations, that he received neither the critical admiration nor the readership he deserved. If we judge a poet by what he attempts and what he achieves, I would say that Sissman earned precisely the readership he deserved, that of hardcore Manhattanites who like wised-up poems which sound sophisticated while implacably hostile to modes of sophistication not of their own kind. A topical poet gets the present rewards of his wit, like an actor, by his request performances, and I can't believe that Sissman's frequent contributions to *The New Yorker*, to say nothing of awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the Phi Beta Kappa Society were inadequate to his talent, which was not distinguished. Davison complains: "Some fellow poets praised his accomplishments but the moral terrorists who dominated the poetry business of the time withheld their accolades." *Of the time?* Way back there six years ago! Nancy Sullivan, to whom above I gave a CIA clearance, must qualify in fact as a moral terrorist, for she, too, has withheld her accolades. I fear that the defence of Sissman is exaggerated. To believe that he was a first-class practitioner of urbane critical verse is not only to forget W. H. Auden but also, let me insist, John N. Morris, William Meredith, Oscar Mandel. Brevity, taste and a perfect ear are the qualifications for an epigrammatic poet who is chiefly moved by asperity towards the social setting. Sissman had a tin ear (his mindless alliterations send one up the wall); he was deficient in moral nuance; when his animosity was aroused—frequently—he was incapable of distinguishing acceptable polemic from the ugliest forms of abuse.

> And what do *you* do?" Mrs. Appoplex,
> Fat dam of some dim Story Street savant
> In baggy Marrimekko muumuu and
> Barbara Inca necklet, asks my wife
> At some dream sherry party packed with ham-
> Strung academics swaying gently in
> The wind of Babel. "Why, just cook and fuck,"
> My wife does not, so sweetly, tender in
> Reply, although I wish like hell she would.
> Whose world is real, for Christ's sake, anyway?
> "Notes Towards a 25th Reunion"

The question may not be couth but it's a good question. Could this represent what Kramer maintained when he said that Sissman "wrote with precision, fluency and wit about the ordinary experience of *his* world, which is recognizably *our* world"? I am reminded of the moment in Walter Bernstein's script for Woody Allen, *The Front*, when that lovely earnest girl pleads, "After all, we *do* live in this world!" And quickly, nervously, Allen protests: "No! *You* live in it! I live right here!"

Of the four poetesses who follow, three announce, at varying levels of heat, that *they* live in this world only on sufferance from the male beast, by and for whom the world was made and to whom they are forced to concede a lion's share of importance: without him, half their poems would never be written! Adrienne Rich is Lysistrata in this company: her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forcible poems, by no means *confined* to vilifying male supremacy, are nonetheless powered by it.[13] This phase of her writing is fairly unnegotiable by any but critics of her own gender; so long as she believes that civilisation is a lethal male conspiracy—"children picking up guns/ for that is what it means to be a man"—it's a waste of breath to hint that there might be more to civilisation and to being a man than she cares to observe in her capsulated state of anger, self-regard and inequity-hunting. "Power" (included, by the way, in the Sullivan anthology) is a defining example of her compulsive creed of suffering. If Madame Curie, in that poem, denied that "her wounds came from the same source as her power," the poems of Adrienne Rich make clear that her resentments, which she tends to celebrate as acts of compassion, come from the same source as her wounds. One can hardly avoid the conclusion that the poet discovered her real nature late in life and is so resentful at not having discovered it earlier she is never going to forgive whatever part of creation she can interpret as the oppressor of her self-discovery. Miss Rich writes with an emotional intensity unmatched by any of her female contemporaries. Her "Twenty-One Love Poems" are for those who can read them without feeling intrusive. For those who cannot, she is best when metaphor is not repressed by exhortation: for example, "The Lioness," whose perfection I apologize for damaging by partial quotation.

> Under her haunches' golden hide
> flows an innate, half-abnegated power.
> Her walk
> is bounded. Three square yards
> encompass where she goes. . . .
>
> I come towards her in the starlight.
> I look into her eyes
> as one who loves can look,
> entering the space behind her eyeballs,
> leaving myself outside.
> So, at last, through her pupils,
> I see what she is seeing:
> between her and the river's flood,
> the volcano veiled in rainbow,
> a pen that measures three yards square.
> Lashed bars.
> The cage.
> The penance.

Has anyone ever thought how much of contemporary America is contained in a flip confession by Edmund, in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*? "It was a mistake my being born a man. I'd have been much more successful as a seagull or a fish." When their ties with society are severed, or when their aspirations sour, Americans are quick to revert, in their

[13] THE DREAM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE, Poems 1974–1977, by *Adrienne Rich*. Norton. $9.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

imagination, to a non-human existence, as if it were out of the question to *humanise* oneself in the teeth of error. Naomi Lazard,[14] nearing the end of her rope, indulges a last-resort nostalgia for the life of a bear or a wolf. (To evoke is not the same thing as to identify oneself. Miss Rich's lioness is an emblem, not a Rousseau surrogate.) The predicament of the disfranchised urban woman is exemplified rather clearly by the three principal divisions into which Miss Lazard's poems fall. (Chronology doesn't matter, since I don't imagine she wrote the poems in the order of their printing.) Social reciprocity and the occasions that formalize it having been virtually abolished on the American scene, the language of it, deep-frozen, has been perpetuated in those "ordinances" which are the subject of her latest publication.[15] This is not an America with which I am familiar. My salient impression, after an absence of twenty years, was of a plebeian chaos, an exploding Harlem wherein Noise and the rip-off is what it's all about. Miss Lazard writes of a cool well-lighted filing-cabinet which sounds more like Sweden. (Of course, areas of Protestant U. S. A. do resemble Sweden: Sweden with din.) The poems are in any case very funny, though resident Americans may find them grave. I like especially "Re. Accepting You" (i.e. "your response to our advertisement"):

> You have told us a great deal
> about yourself, and the telling
> was brief. This too is a virtue.
> We like it. Lastly,
> you appear not to have become bitter
> from your experience. This
> we find extraordinary.
>
> At this point we would like to meet you.
> You are invited to come here
> for an evening we have arranged.
> Everyone to whom we have written
> favorable answers such as this one
> will be here. You will come
> at your own expense. The trip
> will be worth the trouble. The party,
> as long as it lasts, will be fun.
> If things don't work out as you hope
> you will not be reimbursed,
> but you will be placed
> on our mailing list.

Iced off from the "creative professional" life, debarred from the drawing-room, in any traditional sense, dissatisfied with the role of mate-and-mother, or perhaps having missed the role, the protagonist in the earlier poems retires to the bedroom, with another woman's husband. Except

[14] THE MOONLIT UPPER DECKERINA, by *Naomi Lazard*. Sheep Meadow Press. $3.95.
[15] ORDINANCES, by *Naomi Lazard*. Ardis. $3.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that their language is superior, half the poems in the 1977 volume remind me (miserably) of movies made by the Perrys and by Paul Mazursky. Addressed scathingly to a "you," a married lover who has no intention of altering his status, they are composed, with finesse, in an idiom halfway between the uptight and the lyrical. From there, as I said above, the self of the Lazard poem dreams of forsaking all others to run with the wolves, follow the bear, gnaw off her foot like the trapped beaver, step out with her big cats.

You can only substitute the order of nature for the order of society if you understand that it *is* an order, with laws more inexorable than those that fence man. No one who has ever had a working relationship with animals would wish to *be* one. Maxine Kumin[16] watches her son turn into a crow, her daughter into a porcupine, *on their way* to becoming authentically human. She writes about beavers; they are not symbolic in the same way as Lazard's. They have a job to do.

> Measurers live here, rat-shaped and tough,
> with cutting tools for teeth and tails that serve
> as plasterers' trowels.

Her poems, too, are haunted, by a friend who has committed suicide, leaving a trail of associations, by relatives who weren't as interesting as death should have made them. But a life-way of chores in time with seasons that stop for no man's grief or pleasure has taught Maxine Kumin something about mortality: the retrieval system of the title.

> . . . . Fact: it is people who fade,
> it is animals that retrieve them. A boy
> I loved once keeps coming back as my yearling colt,
> cocksure at the gallop, racing his shadow
> for the hell of it. . . .

Between the lines—not choking them—of Mrs. Kumin's verse are some of the same anxieties that ravage other women, other poets, even though the third-person world, a blight to Adrienne Rich, an ice palace to Naomi Lazard, has been relegated save as a place into which her children have escaped, or as a memory of Grandfather arguing against Roosevelt or as the market to which she must truck her slaughtered ewes. While she thinks "of how it goes on,/ this dark particular bent of our hungers," her poems go on, numbering the streaks of the tulip.

> I open a tree.
> In the stupefying cold
> —ice on bare flesh a scald—
> I seat the metal wedge
> with a few left-handed swipes,

[16] THE RETRIEVAL SYSTEM, by *Maxine Kumin*. Viking. $8.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then with a change of grips
lean into the eight-pound sledge

It's muslin overhead.
Snow falls as heavy as salt.
You are four months dead.
The beech log comes apart
like a chocolate nougat.
The wood speaks
first in the tiny voice
of a bird cry, a puppet-squeak,
and then all in a rush,
all in a passionate stammer.
The papery soul of the beech
released by wedge and hammer
flies back into air.

"Splitting Wood at Six Above"

(Note the single parenthetical line that subtly delays the second-person burden of the poem: "You are four months dead".) Each of these poems is a quiet splendor, an event transfigured by an ideal extension; each is saved from the morbidity of the shadow by its fidelity to the event, to the earthbound presence of a person, place, beast or thing-to-be-done.

Prior to this slim chapbook,[17] Ann Deagan's excellent poems were secluded from wider attention, it seems, by publication in remote periodicals with names that chill me, like *Cold Mountain Review* and *New Collage*. Miss Deagon combines a macabre imagination with wit and provocative metaphor; if there is a mordant feminist edge to her first-person poems she is clearly more concerned with shaping a form to resolve the tensions of whatever quarrel she may have with the nature of things (we all have one) than she is with airing the particularities of the quarrel. Her title poem (one of three she calls "A Gynecology") admirably encloses and reveals the *craftiness* of her design.

Among the agents used by counterfeiters
to age their stock are: glycerine,
whale oil, rose water. I know this art.
To make their tender legal, to pass current,
my petaled, my limpid aunts
distilled in the coiled copper of their afternoons
animal, vegetable, mineral
into a balmy essence that preserved
their beauty moist.
Leathered as I am,
Aunties, sisters, I smear my page
with crafty balsam, beauteous conceit,
hide to the last, last line the truth that's not
beauty but bone. bone. bone. bone.

[17] THERE IS NO BALM IN BIRMINGHAM, by *Ann Deagon*. David R. Godine. $5.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And the last, last line of these poems, in *Tod und das Weib*, perfects a "beauteous conceit" in which, having bequeathed her body to the anatomists of Johns Hopkins, the poet feels "at dying as at borning/against my flesh in their sweet fumble/ the brash tentative hands of men." Meanwhile—that is, in other poems—she probes the myth she has distilled, the memories she has refined or invented, the emotions demanding priority. "Somewhere between/bed and chair and table I learned/ hate, pity, desire. But not which/of these is the greatest. That shell game I still play." Part of the game is a biting inclination to identify herself, middle distance: with an Egyptian figurine of "naked symmetry: only the feet missing—/ broken off, so the card informs,/ to forestall escape from the dead/ man's embraces"; with herself as child in a tree-house, which on second thought she forswears; with an infectious spider, migrating north. I don't know if "Customs of the Esquimaux Women" is the sovereign token of her "truth that's not/ beauty" but I am counting on it to bring my review to an impressive end.

They do not stalk the caribou
tall-boned over hard white.
Kneeling fur-trousered low to
the bleak of ice they cut one
pure hole, prise up its flat moon.
In under sea the muscled seal
like dark pigs root for air.
One woman loosens furs, dips one
bare breast into the breathing hole:
its nipple spurts a thread of scent.
Seal veer and rise, their snouts
nudge, nuzzle, strike. The woman
screams, they grapple, tug the black
clenched beast on ice, hack off
its head, the woman's cry still coming hoarse,
rhythmic.

Nights in the igloo she crouches,
softens stiff skin between her teeth.
Beside her in a shallow stone
seal blubber flickers the whole night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDMUND L. KING

Lorca, Guillén, Salinas, and Aleixandre

ARE LITERARY GENERATIONS MERE CHRONOLOGICAL CONVENIENCES or do they have ontological status? Spanish minds, which have had much more important things to worry about, have given more thought to the question than it is worth. Dámaso Alonso, however, is not one of the worriers. He believes quite simply that the consortium of poets that includes himself, Jorge Guillén, García Lorca, Pedro Salinas, Vicente Aleixandre, and a few others displays group characteristics sufficient to confer on it some kind of ontology: it is in revolt against nothing, certainly not against its poet-fathers, Unamuno, Machado, Juan Ramón Jiménez; it in fact acknowledges the special poetic paternity of Juan Ramón; it experienced in its youth the exciting and stimulating influence (the word seems perfectly apt here) of various "foreign" aesthetic revolutions—*ultraísmo*, cubism in painting, *asepsia* in the plastic arts and architecture as well as in poetry, where Valéry is the *spiritus rector* in a neo-parnassian dedication to technical perfection; it was held together by precisely the absence of a leader (*caudillo*) and consequently developed into a fraternity based on amiable individualism; it despised all that was routine, narrow-minded, boorish; it joined in the cult of Góngora.[1]

It was the cult of Góngora that attached the date 1927 to the generation of Salinas, Guillén, Gerardo Diego, Dámaso, Aleixandre, Lorca, Cernuda, Alberti, etc., for that year marked the third centenary of the great baroque poet's death. How the homage to Góngora went on throughout the year and what a salutary effect it had on the young poets, who necessarily took a very large part in it, we may learn from Alberti, in his autobiography recently brought out in a serviceable English translation.[2] Lorca and he, particularly, Alberti thought, were being carried away by "a frivolous and dangerous Andalusianism . . . threatening to invade everything, creating a dangerous epidemic that could have the effect of destroying us all. . . . The glorification of [Góngora] and the infiltration of his labyrinthine underbrush into our own poetic jungle would help us exorcise the evil." A hodge-podge, a self-serving potpourri more or less in chronological order, the autobiography intermingles the events of the Góngora celebration and the developing friendship between Alberti and the bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, the darling and disciple of more than one of the poets. "Ignacio felt very much at ease with us, so much so that one day he shoved us all into a train and took us to Sevilla, to the Ateneo. He had arranged with the director . . . for a series of readings and lectures to be given by the 'seven avant-garde literary celebrities from Madrid,' as we were called in

[1] See Alonso's little-known article "Una generación poética (1920–1936)" in *Finisterre* (Madrid), March 1948.

[2] THE LOST GROVE: Autobiography of a Spanish Poet in Exile, by *Rafael Alberti*. Translated by *Gabriel Berns*. University of California Press. $11.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the newspaper *El Sol*, or 'the brilliant Pléiade,' to quote from an article in a local paper that celebrated our arrival. This luminous constellation was composed of Bergamín, Chabás, Diego, Dámaso Alonso, Guillén, García Lorca, and me. . . . The inhabitants of Sevilla are a noisy bunch, given to exaggeration, and the audience cheered Guillén's difficult *décimas* as if they were beautifully executed passes performed by a *torero* in the bullring. Federico [Lorca] and I alternately read the most complicated fragments from Góngora's *Soledades*, to the accompaniment of enthusiastic interruptions from the audience. But the moment of uncontrollable delirium occurred when Lorca recited part of his *Gypsy Ballads*."

Alberti, true to his slapdash manner, does not think of telling his reader that the occasion for which the new Pléiade was carried off to Seville was precisely a celebration of the Góngora anniversary, or that the sessions he describes at the Ateneo took place in mid-December of 1927. The latter fact is of no consequence, to be sure, but since the entire autobiography is an arbitrary concatenation of superficialities generally amusing and flattering to everyone mentioned, including the author himself, one feels cheated by the skimping on exact information. Some day someone might find some significance in the stories Alberti has to tell.

For the present we can use him to connect us with the other poets whose works in translation are the subject of this review. "We were in the gardens of the Residencia de Estudiantes where García Lorca, then studying to be a lawyer, had lived for several years. . . . He was dark, olive-skinned, with a tuft of hair plastered across his broad forehead. His eyes sparkled and his open smile could, at any moment, become quickly transformed into a burst of laughter: he looked less like a gypsy than a peasant, with that mixture of refinement and coarseness that seems to spring from Andalusian soil." Lorca had already written at least one of the ballads that would go into the *Romancero Gitano* (the best-known one, "*Verde, que te quiero verde*"), so he must have finished by then *Canciones 1921–24*, even though it was not to be published till 1927. We now have *Canciones* in English, in an utterly incompetent translation by Philip H. Cummings.[3] Bad as the translation is (more about this presently), the book as a whole may even so convey some sense of the early Lorca, less familiar to the English-reading public than the Lorca of the plays, of *Poet in New York*, and of the *Gypsy Ballad Book*. Thus, we seem to have great variety in the poems—"Theories" (I am quoting the section titles) of life and death in a general sort of way; "Nocturnes"; "Songs for Children" with their nonsensical repetitions, implausibilities, questions, and answers; quasi-popular "Andalusian Songs," including one that is in every anthology of Spanish poetry, "The Song of the Horseman"; "Three Portraits with Shade"—about Verlaine, Juan Ramón Jiménez, and Debussy; "Games" that are more melancholy than playful; "Songs of the Moon"; "Eros with a [Walking] Stick," highlighting nudes, thighs, breasts, and the like; "The Other World" of grotesqueries—the poet kept awake by drunks on a

[3] SONGS, by *Federico García Lorca*. Translated by *Philip Cummings*, with the assistance of Federico García Lorca. Edited by *Daniel Eisenberg*. [Spanish text not given.] Duquesne University Press. $9.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

break from a death watch, a dumb boy, a crazy boy, a suicide; "Love (with Wings and Arrows)" in a sequence of longings and ambiguously consummated encounters; and finally some ten "Songs for the Ending" dedicated to Rafael Alberti. To all these is appended, in the translation, a poem from *Poet in New York,* "Ruin," because it was written when Lorca was visiting Cummings in Vermont in 1929.

Canciones, i.e., "Songs," is a work of the youthful Lorca, described not only by Alberti but by other contemporaries as always full of mischief, jokes, and nonsense, the life of many parties, but there is only one poem of unmitigated hilarity in the whole book. Since it is exceptionally free of translator's blunders, quotation is permissible, even though it falls far short of the sense of comical immediacy conveyed by the original. (The reader should be advised, however, that where, no doubt for reasons of decorum, Cummings says "hips," which in Spanish would be "caderas," Lorca says "culo," which is plain old "ass.")

In Málaga

Sumptuous Leonarda.
Pontifical flesh and white robe,
on the balustrades of "Villa Leonarda."
Displayed to the trams and boats.
Black bathing bodies hide
the shore of the sea. Swaying
—shell and lotus at a time—
comes [*sic*] your hips
of Ceres in rhetoric of marble.

Otherwise, the heterogeneous subjects purvey a homogeneous thematic fabric of frustrated love, separation, unfulfillment, endings, menace, estrangement, and death. Even the apparently carefree songs dedicated to children—whose songs of course are notoriously candid about life's terrors—take on the coloration of their thematic environment.

The lizard is weeping.
His mate is weeping.

. . . . . .

Look at them, how old they are!
How old are the lizards!

Ah, how they weep,
Ah, ah, how they are weeping.

Nowhere do we find love evoked in wonder or recalled in sadness.

The editor of this book of translations, Professor Daniel Eisenberg, would have us believe that it needed to be published because "it is the only translation of Lorca's poetry in which the author actively assisted," re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flecting, as a consequence of the line-by-line discussion of each poem with the poet, the author's "intentions more than any other could." Cummings is characterized as "one of the many colorful and fascinating people with whom Federico was constantly surrounded," as something of a Hispanist and as "a poet in his own right." I know nothing of Cummings's own poetry, but a clumsy, naïve hand is all too evident in the fondness he shows here for "poetic" English rather than English plain and strong like Lorca's Spanish. One could overlook the couple of times he says " 'Tis" but not the dozen instances or more of *as* where *like* is required ("My shadow goes as an immense/gnat of violet color"); or the rigorously high-toned use of *bear* to translate *llevar,* which in almost all cases would be more idiomatically translated by *take* or *carry* or *wear* or some other less elevated word ("I will make with it a ring/which my silence will bear/on its little finger"); or the extremely frequent inversion, to no discernible purpose, of subject and verb ("And the wandering water will come red/ while runs my blood deep within the bower"); or conspicuous, at times capricious, archaism ("Meanwhile the wind/Is become a flower of tulle"—"What a long embrace I have given you/In the shade of my thorns!/Blackberry, where dost thou go?"). On top of all this, the English grammar is sometimes wrong, as in the case of "comes your hips" quoted above (serves him right, one might add, for the pointless inversion).

Mr. Cummings evidently knows some Spanish but evidently he does not know enough to translate the language with authority, and at twenty-three, when he translated *Canciones,* he did not know enough to know when he was stumped and needed help. The idea that Lorca himself knew enough English to certify the adequacy of the translations can simply be laughed out of court on the evidence of the many outright mistakes—not errors in taste or nuance but failures to grasp the plain sense of the original—that he let pass throughout the book. *Songs,* in sum, is not a trustworthy version of the *Canciones* and is not much as poetry in English. It is evidently the byproduct of a sweet moment of friendship between the poet and a young American, an episode that belongs to Lorca's biography, not to his bibliography. Cummings, left to his own devices, would surely have kept it among his private papers. That is where it belongs.

What a relief to turn to Jorge Guillén's *Cántico,* represented in English by fifty poems selected in a fairly even distribution from the 334 of the Spanish original.[4] There are eleven translators, including names that command a certain recognition as poets. The best poets sign their names to the best translations—W. S. Merwin and Richard Wilbur. I put the matter so cautiously because I understand that Wilbur does not claim to know Spanish and worked from literal versions produced by professional philologists, and whether or not Merwin worked in this fashion with the poems at hand, I know that in other translations he has had the good sense to seek philological assistance.

In the center of *Cántico,* which has for its subtitle "In Praise of Living,"

[4] CANTICO: A SELECTION, by *Jorge Guillén.* Edited by *Norman Thomas di Giovanni.* [Reissue. Spanish text *en face.*] Little, Brown and Company. $6.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we find a sonnet on death, but it is "Death, from a Distance"—death as a part of living, the part with which it ends, in the fullness of time. A perfect sonnet by Guillén yields a perfect sonnet by Wilbur:

Je soutenais l'éclat de la mort tout pure
—Valéry

When that dead certainty appalls my thought,
My future trembles on the road ahead.
There where the light of country fields is caught
In the blind, final precinct of the dead,
A wall takes aim.
But what is sad, stripped bare
By the sun's gaze. It does not matter now—
Not yet. What matters is the ripened pear
That even now my hand strips from the bough.

The time will come: my hand will reach, some day,
Without desire. That saddest day of all,
I shall not weep, but with a proper awe
For the great force impending, I shall say,
Lay on, just destiny. Let the white wall
Impose on me its uncapricious law.

So precisely equated are Wilbur's images and meter to Guillén's (one must grant that the stately cadence of iambic pentameter for which the English reader's ear is programmed is only a syllabic equivalent of the Spanish hendecasyllable, which it can in no other way resemble) that one can point out the obvious discrepancies without for a moment implying that they are wrong: Guillén speaks of "the ripe fruit" ("el maduro fruto"); to help his rhyme, presumably, Wilbur makes the fruit a pear. And Guillén's hand peels the fruit ("La mano ya le descorteza") where Wilbur's "strips [it] from the bough."

Poetry, it might be argued, has always inclined to Platonism or at least to Platonizing, and *Cántico* acknowledges the proposition by opposing it, by affirming the value of living in the real world, by celebrating the experience of consciousness, that consciousness which, without experience, would not know that it existed.

A balcony, window glass,
Some books, and a table.
Nothing more? Nothing more than that. Only
These tangible prodigies.

Thank God we can have here an honest quarrel with the translator (Ben Belitt). He has surely grasped Guillén's general sense, but general sense is Platonizing. Too many words and we begin to feel that the idea, the concept, the vocabulary of reality is what counts, not reality itself. Guillén himself does not say "*and* a table" but simply "a table," and he goes on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more economically than Belitt: "Just this? Yes, concrete marvels." The quibble is significant: throughout this long opening poem Guillén avoids almost entirely verbs in the first person because he does not want to suggest by such grammar that the world is real because he perceives it. The prodigies are not, for his present purposes, tangible, waiting for him to touch them; they are concrete, impinging upon his consciousness from out there. So the argument of *Cántico* opens, and so it closes—if I may dispense for the moment with Belitt's well-intentioned and even rather skillfully wrought translation and stick as close as I can to Guillén's Spanish, happily present in this volume:

> It is the round world that calls.
> I hear the copious invitation.
> The soul will check
> Its power to weep.
> I am not anyone, I am not anything.
> But I am—with shoulders
> That push back and hold up
> And eyes that grow wide
> As they marvel at how the world
> Spreads itself out anew for wonderment.

Between the beginning of the book and the end are, in the complete Spanish original, 332 poems that celebrate the ordinary experiences of life, experiences that thus become extraordinary, experiences by definition—and faith—good—all the "normal" things that can be encountered in a day (and of course as long as one is awake, in a night). And since reality is what is, not what was or what may be, we have a rhetoric of the present, things in space more than actions in time, more nouns—far more—than verbs. Only the consummation of love generates verbs of action rather than of state:

> And the answers come forth,
> Crying out, pellmell.
> The climax imminent?
> If imminence could last and last!
>
> Ardor, ardor, ardor
> Serving sweetness,
> Sweetness that goes wild
> Wildly toward frenzy.
>
> Not, not yet frenzy, more ardor
> Ardor extraordinary,
> Terrible, that would be
> Savage, atrocious, or . . . ! Rapture.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The infinite? No.
The unsustainable anguish ends.
Love is complete:
At its very limits it finds ecstasy.

Limits! And peace begins
The parting of the bodies.
Two lie there, two. And they give up,
Surrendering to separate dreams.

It's a daring trick to try, and Guillén brings it off in Spanish without a bobble: no doubt there are smiles of assent in the audience, but there's no snickering, no tittering. I cannot imagine such a performance in modern English. "Among the works of men some do stand out as permitting a glimpse of potential or achieved perfection, very different from impossible, ideal perfection, far from any kind of platonic archetype," writes Guillén elsewhere about *Cántico*. But the "normal" experiences represented by Guillén, of "dawns, mornings, noons, evenings, sunsets, nights, springs, summers, falls, winters, heat and cold, light and shade, earth and sky, the sun, the moon, the stars," through the fanatical purity of Guillén's spatialization transcend the dazzlingly representational and inevitably become representative.

In *La voz a ti debida,* of Pedro Salinas, which we now have in an English translation by Willis Barnstone,[5] the only thing Platonic is the title (from Garcilaso de la Vega's third eclogue). In the seventieth (and last) of this sequence of obsessive poems about what would vulgarly be called an affair, Salinas turns the usual Platonic order upside down. It is intolerable to believe that our every-day business is an errant, imperfect reflection of an ideal, true reality. The only good thing about ideas and the longings they induce is the things that they are ideas of, that are longed for:

Do you hear how they beg for realities,
those disheveled terrible
shadows that we both make up
in this great bed of distances?
Tired now of infinity, of loose
time, of anonymity, and *stricken*
by an intense nostalgia for matter,
they ask for limits, days, names.
They can't
live this way any longer: they are at the edge
of the death of shadows, that is nothingness.
Come near, come with me.
Stretch out your hands, offer them your body.

[5] MY VOICE BECAUSE OF YOU, by *Pedro Salinas*. Translated and introduced by *Willis Barnstone*, preface by *Jorge Guillén*. [Spanish text not given.] State University of New York Press. $10.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Barnstone stays much closer to his original than any of our other translators, but his translation is not strong enough to stand alone and begs for the company of the Spanish, unhappily not provided. Indeed, there are spots where the English can only be understood by looking up Salinas's own language, for example, the fifth, sixth, and seventh lines of the passage quoted above:

> Cansadas ya de infinidad, de tiempo
> sin medida, de anónimo, *heridas*
> *por* una gran nostalgia de materia,

in which the words I have italicized are wrongly translated as "wounds from," rather than as "stricken by."

Elliptical in the best post-symbolist style, and not only because it partakes of that style but because the painfully teasing elisions of carnal love are what the poems and the poem are all about, *My Voice Because of You* challenges the reader's readiness to fill in the blanks, to leap the gaps with the poet. To the uninvolved, the story itself could not be more banal. But Salinas is even more daring than Guillén as he runs the rapids of infatuation, seeming to say, look how close I can get to the eddies of sentimentalism and pornography without being sucked in. Again, we have the language of every-day things. I choose at random, from poem No. 18: sinless, day, foam, horn, white, bodies, rocks, innocent, matter, zenith, noon, light, awareness, shadow, etc.—the level does not change. The actions are two: the poet who sees and tells:

> Can it be that island
> so clumsily inside
> you,
> forgive the hurting, at times.
> It's that I want to take out
> of you the best you.

All the silly little fumblings that are the sign of singlemindedness in the actual lovemaking of two utterly embodied spirits express the sense that reality may not be achieved but must be pursued, that it is indeed fugitive, that if it is "achieved" it will last but a moment. That is what all the poetic excitement is about and that is why the delights of anticipation, realization, and recollection are never without the counterpoint of anxiety, terror, and nostalgia. No spatialization here. Guillén and Salinas are both unmystical, but they are unmystical in different ways. Remember Guillén and listen to Salinas:

> Lovers
> wanderingly through the world [always getting lost].
> . . . . . .
> The two of us. What disasters!
> Where's the road? Here,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there? False maps,
juggling the routes,
gamble for our loss
among beaconless dangers.

This is not the place to discuss whether Vicente Aleixandre should have been the Spanish—or Hispanic—writer to receive the Nobel Prize in 1977, or even to speculate about non-literary considerations that might have influenced the Swedish Academy's decision. Still, it is interesting to note that one of Aleixandre's works, *Sombras del Paraíso,* became available to Scandinavian readers in 1974 in Swedish translations by the Spanish writer Jorge Padrón and Artur Lundkvist and that no other poet of the Generation of 1927 has been similarly favored in the last ten years. Lewis Hyde and Robert Bly brought out their English versions of twenty poems in 1977,[6] representing in their selection the ten or so volumes of Aleixandre's maturity, from *Espadas como labios* ("Swords like Lips," 1932—the only work of Aleixandre's that anyone except professional literary people even in Spain could call to mind prior to the award of the prize) to his last book, *Poemas de la Consumación* ("Consummation Poems," 1968).

Lewis Hyde, who appears to have translated seventeen of the twenty poems, says in his introduction, "My goal has been to re-create the flavor of the poems in common American speech." He and Mr. Bly have produced faithful translations. Although I find a few places where I am reasonably certain they are wrong, there is nothing that requires public denunciation. But flavor? Common American speech? Whatever may be the merits of Aleixandre's poems, they are not of the kind that have "flavor," and when a translator tells me he is going to use "common American speech," I feel that I am about to be subjected to indecent exposure. I am glad that Mr. Hyde is not as good as his word. Take the following stanza:

Oh you, most beautiful, a surprised skin,
a blind smoothness like an ocean moving toward its center,
a calm, a stroking bull, bull of a hundred powers,
facing a forest, stopped at the edge with horror.

If prosiness is a flavor, then this passage has a strong flavor, the "flavor" to be found in most of Aleixandre's poetry. I don't know what common American speech is, but Americans who talk about bulls don't talk about their "surprised skins" or say any of the other things that Aleixandre says about them. Precisely because the prime characteristic of Aleixandre's poetry is its calculated prosiness, it comes off well in translation. If I wanted a subjective adjective to describe it, I would say that it is thick. Reading Aleixandre is like running through high grass. The thickness does not come, of course, only from the prosiness, which one might expect

[6] TWENTY POEMS, by *Vicente Aleixandre.* Translated by *Lewis Hyde* and *Robert Bly.* Edited by *Lewis Hyde.* [Spanish text *en face.*] The Seventies Press. $5.00; $3.00 paperback.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to make for smooth going, but from the use of this vehicular mode to convey a freight of images just unexpected enough to perplex without being sharply striking. The four lines quoted above illustrate the point, but, belonging to Aleixandre's early, so-called surrealist phase, they rise above the merely bumpy flatness of *Historia del Corazón* ("The Heart's History," 1945–58), that goes like this:

> One more day I touch your hand, your warm hand!
> Your hand is thin and quiet—sometimes I shut
> my eyes and stroke it gently, softly,
> to feel its shape, to touch
> its structure, the skin with its wings and beneath that
> the stony bone that can't be bribed, the sad bone that
> never gets any
> love. Oh sweet flesh that soaks itself in such spendid love!

Carlos Bousoño, who has been Aleixandre's most faithful advocate and expositor, finds an evolution from a kind of gross, overwhelming naturalism to a stoic humanism in Aleixandre's poetic world. First, the stage is occupied almost entirely by non-human nature; if man is present at all, except as the speaking poet, he cowers, out of place:

> The tiger, the hunting lion, the elephant that wears
> some soft necklace around its tusks,
> the cobra that looks like a lover's fire,
> the eagle that fondles its rock as if it were hard brain,
> the little scorpion who dreams of oppressing an instant
> of life with nothing but its claws,
> the foolish presence of a human body that could never
> be confused with the jungle, ...

Then human life, or at least human mortality, is given equal billing, but as if evolution had gone into reverse:

> An ocean isn't a bed where a man's body can stretch out
> all alone.
> An ocean isn't a shroud to cover a shining death.
> The moon keeps going, it scratches and soaks and sinks
> into the packed sand.
> It gives the calm green murmurs an incredible motion.
> A corpse stands up and sways for a moment,
> he wavers and then goes on.

Finally man dominates the scene, and it is nature that has to cadge a bit of poetic space:

> I've loved you every moment of that afternoon.
> And now, that isn't the sunset falling over there, that's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all life falling; and that isn't
the sun sinking; it's life itself coming to an end,
and I love you.

I find less evolution than Bousoño does but rather a moving back and forth through this gamut in most of Aleixandre's poetic ruminations, though in his old age he does weary of stolid stoicism and takes up ever so lighter a manner. "El cometa" means both "The Comet" and "The Kite":

Its long hair is a sad thing.
It must not last as long
as the stars, so thoughtful. And it flies off.
It flies off like the comet.
Like Haley's [*sic*] comet when I was a child.
A child watches and believes.
He sees the trailing tail
and what he sees are the holy robes
of a comet that was hoisted into the sky by a child.

So much for the child. "The Old Man Is Like Moses" (in 1968):

Because like Moses, he dies,
. . . . . .
And in that place the generations to come, the earth:
the borderline.
The thing others will see.

Some critics have seen in the conceptual and emotional trajectory of Aleixandre's poetry an extended comment on Spanish life in the poet's time. Who is to say they are wrong?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GARY DAVENPORT

Grandfather Dictionary

> "What would you say, Sir, if you were told that in a hundred years' time a bigger and better dictionary than yours would be compiled by a Whig?" Johnson grunted. "A Dissenter." Johnson stirred in his chair. "A Scotsman." Johnson began, "Sir . . . " but Boswell persisted—"and that the University of Oxford would publish it." "Sir," thundered Johnson, "in order to be facetious it is not necessary to be indecent."

THE EXCHANGE SOUNDS AUTHENTIC, but it occurred a century after the great lexicographer's death, in the dream of James Augustus Henry Murray, Whig, Dissenter, Scotsman, holder of nine honorary doctorates, and chief editor of the greatest dictionary in the world. And if this already (and justly) celebrated biography[1] by Murray's granddaughter may be trusted, that instance of vanity is one of the very few, subconscious or otherwise, to tarnish an almost saintly life of scholarly dedication. Furthermore, as in the other instances, it has the justification of truth. For although several European nations (particularly France) are now at work on national dictionaries of great scope, the *Oxford English Dictionary* is still unique.

The *OED*, like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, is the product of an age, and almost certainly could not have appeared in an earlier time. In the first place, vernacular languages, despite the examples of Dante and Chaucer, have been a long time attaining full respectability—particularly in British academic circles. The first actual dictionary of the English language (as opposed to English glosses of Latin or another language) was published as recently as 1604, and of course it was only a gloss of the "hard" latinate words that had been swelling the vocabulary of Renaissance English. Indeed it was only in the lifetime of James Murray that English studies began to emerge: the examination for the Indian Civil Service began to include English language and literature in 1855, as did the Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations in 1858. London University (where Murray eventually took a B. A.) gave its first baccalaureate examination in English in 1859. The public schools had English masters, but they were not taken very seriously even as late as the 1870s (at Marlborough the dancing master preceded the English master in academic processions). For a largely self-educated philologist such as Murray this was an ideal environment, because it meant that in his field he was on an equal footing with the Establishment. Walter Skeat, for example, who was the first holder of the Bosworth Chair of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, was formally trained in Mathematics and Theology and, like everyone else in that age, had been forced to acquire Anglo-Saxon on his own. This meant that his knowledge of the subject

[1] CAUGHT IN THE WEB OF WORDS: James A. H. Murray and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, by *K. M. Elisabeth Murray*. Yale University Press. $15.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was not automatically superior to Murray's (in fact it was vastly inferior to Murray's, as Skeat humbly acknowledged). It also meant that serious study of the English language and its literature developed in an atmosphere of amateurism (in the original sense of the term), and was thus for a long time free of the blasé professionalism that has come to characterize the discipline today.

A James Murray could have flourished as he did only in an age when self-development was respectable, for until fairly late in his life he lacked the sort of credentials routinely demanded of a scholar nowadays. By the time (age 33) that he reluctantly decided to pursue a baccalaureate (fearing that his academic work would never be fully acknowledged until he had a "union card"), he had already become a major force in English philology, and had even been granted an honorary doctorate—in an age when honorary degrees still signified—by the University of Edinburgh. He had the pleasure of indulging his again pardonable vanity by asking the Registrar of London University (who had informed him that "appropriate Academical Costume" would be expected at the graduation exercises) whether it would be appropriate to receive his B. A. in his doctoral robes. (Murray was particularly fond of his doctoral cap, and, to judge from the many photographs provided by his biographer, he seems never to have removed it hereafter.) His vanity is pardonable because of his remarkable achievement in self-education; it is (and is sure to remain) sobering to realize that the unchallenged master of the English tongue had only seven years of formal schooling in Scottish border villages before his anticlimactic (and really unnecessary) undergraduate degree. It is fortunate for him and for the English language that he lived when achievement was more impressive than credentials.

And his achievements have the unmistakable mark of genius. Before he was seven years old he would copy Greek and Latin words out of books, ignorant of their meaning, and was equally fascinated by the Hebrew letters marking the sections of the 119th Psalm. He copied and recopied a page of the Gospels in Chinese from the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* until he could identify certain words by the pattern of their recurrence. In fact, translations of the Bible became the main means by which he soon was able to read "in a sort of way 25 or more languages." Reading about his childhood inclinations one can readily believe that Providence intended him (as he later thought) to be a lexicographer, for he was a born collector—not only of words and languages, but of plants, stamps, archaeological specimens, and knowledge of every sort. He was, as a great lexicographer must be, a renaissance man with an insatiable appetite for learning and remembering. He was a holist and a great synthesizer, and saw man and nature, science and art, and the whole of creation in a single glance.

> How often [he said] does man hairsplit, and sever, and part asunder what Heaven has made a whole! . . . Man is fond to classify, to separate, to discriminate, to set apart in little cells of memory the mass of facts he gathers from the field of nature. But nature has no such

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

isolating method—her facts and laws are a continuous, all-connecting network.

It is worth noting in this connection that the turn of mind that made him a botanist and an archaeologist was dominant in the making of the *OED*, which he always approached as a scientist rather than an artist. Although linguists universally regard themselves as scientists nowadays, that attitude was not quite so common in the 1880s, and, as Miss Murray makes clear, her grandfather was by temperament and education one of the few people in his age who could have undertaken the task: "Often those who came to him," she says in discussing Murray's assistants, "were recommended because they had qualifications in, and enthusiasm for, English Literature, but the discipline of lexicography is more akin to science than to literature and the qualities needed were rarely found." Although neither Murray nor his biographer makes the claim, the editor of the *OED* had to be, and was, both a scientist and an artist.

Elisabeth Murray's attitude toward her subject is generally worshipful, but it is convincing. She tells admirably the story of Murray's upbringing, his teaching career, his London interlude as "the most learned bank clerk of the century" (R. W. Burchfield's words in the Preface), and his increasing and finally total absorption in the dictionary. It becomes apparent to the reader that the *OED* owes its excellence to Murray above everyone else. He was not appreciated until very late in his life, and for decades he labored on under the most disheartening conditions imaginable—lack of money, time, space, and understanding. Eventually everyone opposed his uncompromising thoroughness. The Delegates of the Oxford University Press (including at one point Benjamin Jowett) hounded him constantly to produce copy at a faster rate, and paid him so little that he was forced to dip into his own savings for postage and other expenses. Frequently he threatened to resign, and occasionally the Delegates hinted at abandonment of the project. But he made it clear to them, and to the Philological Society (which had begun collecting quotations for the dictionary two decades before the agreement with Oxford), that he was going to do it in his own way or not at all. In this determination he surpassed both Samuel Johnson and the great French lexicographer Littré, both of whom finally decided that they must either ease their standards or produce nothing in their lifetimes. And Murray paid the supreme penalty, for the *OED* was not completed until thirteen years after his death. Eventually he had to have co-editors (the first of whom, Henry Bradley, was soon pushed to a total breakdown by a share of the work that Murray had faced alone for many years), but the conception and spirit and nearly half the text of the dictionary are his.

The Philological Society had begun collecting quotations from readers for a dictionary based on "historical principles" in 1857, and had (with Murray always in mind as editor) approached first Macmillan and then the Oxford Press. From the time of the Oxford contract in 1879 to his death in 1915 Murray worked incessantly—often at the rate of 80 or 90

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hours per week. The World War and Murray's death hindered the effort, and it was 1928 when the dictionary was completed; it was reissued in 1933 with a one-volume supplement, and remained in that state until 1972, when a four-volume supplement under the editorship of R. W. Burchfield began to appear. The language (to say nothing of our attitude toward language) has changed a great deal since the *OED* was compiled, and a complete revision of the work is now sometimes urged. Marghanita Laski, who had a hand in the preparation of the present supplement, called for such a revision in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* of 13 October 1972, arguing that the historical treatment of quotations is often inaccurate (since earlier "first" appearances are now recorded for many words), that the readers who supplied quotations were selective and not always competent (a fact that was obvious to Murray all along), and that the subsequent history of words in the twentieth century needs to be treated. Such revision is probably inevitable. But one may hope that when it is carried out it will be done with a proper regard for human genius, and particularly for that of Murray. For even in the electronic age the main work of lexicography is—incredibly—done by humans. Lexicography, especially the historical sort for which the *OED* is famous, still depends heavily upon intelligent reading and the recording of quotations (of which both the Oxford University Press and Merriam-Webster have ponderous and growing files) just as it did in Murray's day. What is more, it depends on an editorial mentality that is highly sensitive to language and to almost everything else. Thus it is easy to imagine that a new *OED* could supersede Murray's in some ways and fall far behind it in others. It is not a simple case of inevitable progress. The work of a Murray can and should be updated, but as a work of true genius there is at least one sense in which it can never be obsolete. We are reluctant to modernize our poets, freer with our translators (though a good translation is a good poem), and "scientific" about our lexicographers. And perhaps that is as it must be. Still, although we can provide the hardware and the software as no former age could, first-rate "wetware" (current computer slang, I fear, for the brain) is as hard to come by as ever. Murray had it, and his revisers should tread lightly.

Murray's granddaughter, who recalls "Grandfather Dictionary" only vaguely, has written an important and trustworthy biography, making heavy use of a trunkful of unpublished materials passed down by his descendants. Her admiration for Murray is obvious on every page, but she is also capable of being critical, and draws attention to Murray's less attractive attributes—including a martyr complex that almost forced him to refuse the eventual offer of knighthood, and a resentment of some of his co-editors (and of other dictionaries—the American *Century Dictionary* for example) that seems sometimes to verge on paranoia. Her prose is plain and lucid, and her approach is straightforward. Altogether it is a welcome departure from the fuzzy jargon that pours from the university presses today, and it is the sort of biography that would have had at least a chance of approval by its subject, who in his Eliotian view of biography antici-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pated the most learned bank clerk of the *twentieth* century. In 1903 Murray wrote:

> It is one of the hateful characteristics of a degenerate age, that the idle world will not let the worker alone, accept his offering of work, & appraise it for itself, but must insist upon turning *him* inside out, and knowing all about him, and really troubling itself a great deal more about his little peculiarities & personal pursuits, than his abiding work.

The great value of *Caught in the Web of Words* is that although it includes little peculiarities and personal pursuits, it never for a moment loses sight of the things that make James Murray different from the rest of us.

Notes on Contributors

BERT O. STATES is the author of *Irony and Drama: A Poetics* and of *The Shape of Paradox: An Essay on "Waiting for Godot."* He is Professor of English and Theatre Arts at Cornell University.

A. R. AMMONS' most recent book is his *Selected Poems* (Norton).

DAVE SMITH's most recent collection of poems is *Cumberland Station* (University of Illinois Press).

DERWENT MAY* is Literary Editor of *The Listener*. His novel, *A Revenger's Comedy*, will be published by Chatto and Windus in 1979.

Born in New York, JONATHAN CHAVES has published three books on Chinese poetry and articles on Chinese poetic theory and Chinese art.

DAVID HUDDLE,* a teacher at the University of Vermont, is the author of a collection of stories, *A Dream With No Stump Roots In It*, and a book of poems, *Paper Boy*.

JAY PARINI,* a founding editor of the *New England Review*, is a professor of English at Dartmouth College.

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER is the recipient of the 1978 Nobel Prize for Literature. His most recent novel, *Shosha* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), is reviewed in this issue.

RICHARD BURGIN,* editor of *New York Arts Journal*, is the author of *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* and a novel with J. M. Alonso, *The Man with Missing Parts*.

DOUGLASS PARKER teaches Classics at the University of Texas at Austin. He is currently translating and preparing a dramatic version of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius.

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS, Professor of English at Wellesley College, is working on a study of fantasies about adolescence since the eighteenth century. Her most recent book is *Imagining a Self*.

EDMUND L. KING,* Carpenter Professor of Spanish at Princeton University, has written on Gustavo Adolfo Becquer, Gabriel Miro, Jorge Guillén, and Blas de Otero.

GARY DAVENPORT's* chief interest is twentieth-century literature. He is a former professor of English now residing in Chapel Hill.

LESLIE GEORGE KATZ is publisher of the Eakins Press.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LESLIE GEORGE KATZ

The Primacy of Printing

IN AN AGE WHEN LITERATURE AND THE VISUAL ARTS are both beset by controversial vogues and arbitrary standards as well as by stunning developments in technology and commerce, it is a blessing and a relief to work with an essential craft having to do with words, language and graphic image that is compounded of silence and an uncontested order.

The art of the book—design, typography and printing at their best—whether in volumes crafted entirely by hand, or precisely executed by machines that are used as extensions of hand crafting, remains secure and even noble in its practice. Yet, as devotees of the printed book are acutely aware, apparently cataclysmic revolution in printing techniques has taken place. Computerized film-set type and high speed lithography and electronic printing machines have in less than a generation widely replaced letter-press printing from metal types, a process essentially the same in principle as the first printing techniques five hundred years ago. The latest developments of electric printing and lithography, however, are simultaneous with a revival of interest in calligraphy and handwriting, and their reproduction by printed means. Handwriting and calligraphy provided the original source forms for the printed alphabet, and one of the magics of printing as an art is that its fartherest developments remain directly based on its original roots, just as a word electronically amplified is still first formed by tongue and lips.

Joseph Blumenthal, dean of American printers, author of *The Art of the Printed Book 1455-1955,* has recently published a history of printing in America from its beginnings to the present.[1] His book is a cogent and powerful chronicle, an imperturbable judgment of his predecessors, peers and of young printers, from the perspective of a lifetime of high achievement that continues. The volume exemplifies in itself and its illustrations the character of the art it praises.

"The art of the printed book," he writes in conclusion, "one of the slender graces of civilization, works its charm on each new generation . . . The twenty-six letters of the alphabet are still the basic forms with which today's typographic designer fashions his books, as they were for the scribes in the completion of their beautiful volumes on vellum. Despite the vastness and the complexity of today's dissemination of the printed word, the craft of bookmaking still pursues its own unyielding ways."

An extraordinary fact is enunciated in the phrase "unyielding ways." The new, sophisticated developments, while demanding adaptation and inviting experiment, do not appear substantially to affect the *standards* of typographic design and bookmaking that have been maintained, defended, taught—passed on from one printer-designer to another—since

[1] THE PRINTED BOOK IN AMERICA, by *Joseph Blumenthal.* David R. Godine, in association with the Dartmouth College Library. $30.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the "mysterious art" of printing began. The secret remains in skill and workmanship. Three generations of accelerating blather about the inevitable hegemony of technology over form and content in all the visual arts (including painting, sculpture, architecture), while it has in printing developed a brood of new typefaces, hasn't so much as attenuated the serif of a single letter of *most* of the alphabets used in printing today, including the letters printed on the page you are reading.

And while the giant manufacturing automata are publishing by the trillions a magnificent array of paper back titles, with few exceptions cookie cut and "perfect bound" (glued, not sewn), and the conglomerate-owned publishing houses flourish through million-dollar-media books, the "unyielding" tradition of the printed book as art continues unabated. The criteria of excellence persist in design, in type, in paper, and in binding, all as difficult to achieve and unmistakable in quality as ever. The passion for quality is that of an obsessed craft. It is not a rage, for it follows the dictates of immutable terms and rigorous formalities. As the final chapters of Mr. Blumenthal's book inform us, the standards are carried on both by self-sufficient business enterprises serving enlightened patrons and institutions recognizing and needing excellence—libraries, museums, colleges, and sometimes even publishers—and also as a non-profit vocation by private presses mostly operated by independent and individual printers whose dedication is professional and life-long. The Stinehour Press of Lunenburg, Vermont, which serves large publishers, universities and libraries, and private patrons for small editions, is a virtual center of the printing art, where young talents go to work and live. In Nebraska, at the University, Harry Duncan carries on his Abattoir Editions, successor to the Cummington Press he began in Massachusetts in 1939, and later continued at the University of Iowa, principally publishing modern poetry of a quality worthy of hand printing. These are two stellar examples of ambitious enterprises of all sizes and kinds, where the hand and eye together seek to fulfill just proportions in the making of books. The smaller undertakings are most often publishers as well. In the houses of printing there are many mansions. They form a kind of underground community and prosper not out of a philosophy of salvation or therapy through arts and crafts, but out of a fascination with the unique terms of the work and the generic satisfactions it offers.

Of course among hand and machine printers, as in any art, the malpractices of preciosity are only too prevalent. Many of the books are produced for collectors rather than readers and suffer from an excessive showiness that buries contemporary and classic texts (and many of the contemporary deserve to be buried) in mausoleums of "graphic art." The worst are sumptuous renditions of bland trash writings on acid free paper made from peacock feathers intended to outlast the mountains and outshine the sun. But the bad stuff is not the point, the good is.

Good printing, by hand or machine, serves the text, allowing the sense of the words to emerge enhanced rather than encumbered. A printed book is a performance and a living object. (Reproductions of sample pages of books that are masterpieces, as illustrations in books on printing, have no more relation to their originals than color reproductions have to original

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paintings.) Black and white are as natural to the printed word as green is to grass and blue is to sky. The sanity of printing is in its partnership with language as well as its service to meaning. It has the benefit of being a physical translation of the spirit, as music and dancing are.

The letters of the alphabet are divine makeshifts. Like differences between languages, they may appear arbitrary, but their authority is embedded in common use. Their survival and perpetuation are secure beyond the fondest dreams of destruction, dissolution, and obsolescence that make the hearts of pseudo-primitives in other arts beat faster. The alphabet continues because like speech itself it is a satisfactory technique developed for its task in daily practice. In use the new can only develop from the old, and its future evolves from its past. While some fantasists might wish personkind to give up reading and printing entirely and to communicate solely by telephone and television and film and photograph, the deprivations would seem to outweigh the advantages.

In fact, the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet seem as relatively stable in their present forms as the human body, head, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, torso, pelvis, limbs and feet are in theirs. A valid parallel may be made between elements of printing design and execution, and the art of classic theatrical dancing. Both have proven resistant and durable in an age that likes to torment itself with innovation, and both are marvelously adaptable to reform and development. Classic ballet was supposed to be made obsolete by modern dance and the stampedes of self-expression. Today however, classic dance is experiencing a recognition and popularity as never before, based on the very alphabet of steps and gesture supposedly outmoded, providing what one astute participant has defined as "instead of virtuosity, moral weight."

Just as a great choreographer and trained classic dancers enhance the music danced to, approaching perfection of movement by working within rules of technique, great printing design and a well printed book find their ultimate grace in elucidating the author's text within the limits of typography on the stage of the printed page. The effort depends on the acceptance of rules beyond cavil. For that, laws are needed to obey beyond appeal. Classic dancing on stage and words on the printed page both have those laws.

Good printers have present day leaders and earlier saints of their profession to model their work upon. The nature of printing is such that every well printed book ever made is of current significance to the typographer. In his perception and his quest, time is horizontal, not vertical. The scribe is his brother, the first printers his fathers. Gutenberg and Jenson and Aldus and Baskerville and Bodoni are looking over his shoulder. The great and pure printing achievements of Giovanni Mardersteig, who worked mostly in Verona and who died in 1977, beckon him like a standard of the future not the past. The objective continues to be a perfection in which effort becomes invisible, having been absorbed into performance. In the challenges met on the field of the printed page, accident becomes resolved in purpose and limitation itself is transformed into advantage.

In the history of printing since the 1890s, in America and on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

continent, one printer above all others is treated as heroic and of vast influence, the British genius William Morris. Even printers who took a path sharply diverging in direction from the post-Victorian, neo-Medieval, highly-decorated "arts and crafts" style of the Kelmscott Press books produced by Morris acknowledge his preeminence, his power, and the revitalization of printing Morris sought and led. During the period preceding him, the standards of printing were generally lowered by industrialization and hasty machine manufacture for mass dissemination. The high drama of Morris' accomplishment and his effect on American bookmaking and hand crafts is investigated and detailed for the first time in an unusual and rewarding study by Susan Otis Thompson.[2] In twenty-two chapters, each on an individual printer, locale, or movement, her book traces the impact in America of Kelmscott books and Morris' philosophy. Her work in its thoroughness has implications not only for printing but for other applied arts, since it demonstrates in history how, by means of the energy, brilliance and example of one determined man who had a clear idea, the values of the handmade could not only survive the onslaught of the industrial but emerge enhanced. Morris did not hate the machine itself, he hated debased civilization. Paradoxically, his revolt may be said to have provided American and British printer-designers with an unexpected momentum and courage that enabled them to use and develop machine printing intelligently.

William Morris was poet, novelist, translator, artist, decorator, manufacturer, socialist, and ideologue. He came to printing when he was fifty-six, and the adventure climaxed his career. He made real in practice guild and communal ideals which had been envisioned by Carlyle and articulated by Ruskin. Morris proposed to produce according to medieval methods, by which the artist performed as anonymous artisan, rather than as the romantic egoist of the Renaissance. A calligrapher, he designed his own type: ink, paper and binding were handmade to his order under his supervision. His own printing mentor was Emery Walker, whose vision was more classic. In Morris' books, more inspired by calligraphy than by printed models, ornate borders enclosed small text areas on the page of certain publications, yet others except for their title pages were pure, chaste, relatively simple. Daniel Berkeley Updike, who became America's most profound printer, and who admired Morris, wrote that Morris "did make books which it was a pleasure to look at—as arrangements of type and fine pieces of printing—but he did not make books that it was a pleasure to read."

In America the Kelmscott books, with texts by Morris himself or of British classics (Caxton, Chaucer, Keats, Rossetti), found an enthusiastic audience among printers and collectors, and led beginners and professionals to found small publishing enterprises and private presses. His books also helped to galvanize a generation that would go on to become master printers and extended the art by adapting Morris' demands to the possi-

[2] AMERICAN BOOK DESIGN AND WILLIAM MORRIS, by *Susan Otis Thompson*. R. R. Bowker Company. $29.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bilities of machine printing, through the rediscovery, redesign and reuse of classic type faces.

Joseph Blumenthal's history *The Printed Book in America* is as much honor role as illustrated chronology. We learn that the leading historic "commercial" printers throughout American history did support fine printing and bookmaking. Such sophistication, educative as well as worldly, seeking excellence in the commonplace, is strangely appropriate, even indigenous, to the trade practiced as a calling.

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) made his fortune as printer-publisher, but in Paris as first Ambassador maintained a private press at Passy, where he wrote and printed for his friends bagatelles worthy of the age of Mozart and Beaumarchais. Franklin and Morris, though ages apart, both sought beauty and utility in common objects (just as, to take an analogous example, every African "sculpture" is an article of social or religious use). Isaiah Thomas (1749–1831) was the prime printer to the American Revolution; his press was known as "the sedition factory." Printer, binder, paper maker, publisher and bookseller, and on a large scale, Thomas also wrote the first comprehensive history of printing in the new nation, and was a true creature of the American Enlightenment. From the mid-nineteenth century into the twentieth, Theodore Low DeVinne (1828–1914) presided over the introduction of rotary and giant presses yet maintained standards worthy of private presses, and wrote many books to guide and sustain the craft.

In the period from the 1890s to World War II American printing experienced what Mr. Blumenthal terms its renaissance. Its leaders were illustrious and various in character. Most prominent among them were D. B. Updike, Bruce Rogers, F. W. Goudy, Will Bradley, Carl Purlington Rollins, T. M. Cleland, W. A. Dwiggins, Rudolf Ruzicka, J. H. Nash, W. E. Rudge, and Dard Hunter. Daniel Berkeley Updike of Boston (1860–1941) founded his Merrymount Press in 1893 and directed it for forty-eight years. "The mastery he achieved . . ." Mr. Blumenthal writes, "came from a highly developed sense of order and grace, and a determined and disciplined and cultivated mind." He and his contemporary, Bruce Rogers (1870–1957), are recognized as the most accomplished printers America has produced. With the aid of enlightened publishers and an enlightened public during the first half of the twentieth century these men, utilizing machines, were able to bring about what can now be recognized as a golden age of printing and publishing that matched, during the same period, the ferment and quality of American literature and the popular arts.

Both the Blumenthal and Thompson books are exercises in vital particulars. Both books encourage if not intoxication on behalf of the future, the sober thrill of a possibility that the art of printing may withstand—as classical dancing has—the commercial pressures that tend to brutalize technology into "culture." Both books implicitly suggest that the problems of the present electronic age may prove to be not too different from those of the machine age that preceded it. For an age of relativity, nuclear energy and computers, the machine age may have been the best training-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ground possible. Albert Einstein suggested this. The scientist who proved that the physical basis of matter was electronic rather than mechanical wrote that while Newton's findings were outmoded, Newton's fidelity to method had paved the way and provided Einstein with his inspiration.

Ever since Adam and Eve were exiled from Eden to labor for life as penance for knowing evil from good, their philistine descendants have been proclaiming the inevitability of doom while promoting the pleasures and profits of Gomorrah. We forget that Eden was, in its own way, if not computerized, at least confronted by leisure-time problems. The apple of experience had to be bitten and tasted before the woman and man could make their own judgments of quality, for judgment implies taking the risks as well as incurring the satisfactions of original performance. Inside Eden, and outside ever since, the creative decisions of choice are primary. The computer is a robot, a secondary instrument that follows orders, amplifies, disseminates coded answers.

In the craft forms pursued by humankind, as every printer and dancer knows, whether man or woman, good performance or bad performance depend upon training, unremitting attention and the exercise of judgment. Printers work by hand as dancers work by foot, not out of a philosophy of hand or foot craft, but because in the perfection of their art, decisions as to size, proportion, step and spacing are best made and executed in direct extensions of person. The printed book is a direct form of public communication between one person writing in privacy—the author—and one person reading in privacy, the reader. Printing remains an ultimate precinct of craft that mediates between them. The dedicated printer is a member of a working elite. He presides at an unending ceremony. Its details and delectations amount to a mission.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The leopards of the Dorze are long,
Polka dot, circumspect, and Christian.
On Wednesdays and Fridays they fast.
They fast the forty days of Lent.

—Guy Davenport's "Beyond Punt and Cush" in

THE HOLLOW SPRING REVIEW

Volume II, Number 2 also featuring

Louis Phillips, Ronald Wallace,
Joan Colby, Karl Elder,
William Dubie, Ron Atkinson,
Karla Hammond, Jane Katz,
Greg Gatenby, Deborah Pease,
Michael Eigen, Howard Nelson,
Stephen Martin

subscriptions $5/two issues; single copies $2.50

THE HOLLOW SPRING REVIEW
Alexander Harvey, editor
Box 76
Berkshire, MA 01224

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AUTHORS

Adams, Robert Martin: What Was Modernism? 19
Ammons, A. R.: Weather-Bound; Poverty; Sunday at McDonald's; Density; Vehicle; Response (*poems*) 587
Arac, Jonathan: Critical Abstracts (*review*) 365
Becker, Frawley: The Quality of Unmercy (*story*) 86
Bromwich, David: A Hogshead of Sense (*review*) 491
Brown, Frederick, trans.: A Reading of *The Magic Flute*, by Jean Starobinski. 409
Bruchac, Joseph: Drinking from the Maple Buckets (*poem*) 303
Buffington, Robert: Disorder and Early Sorrow (*review*) 393
Burgin, Richard: From Conversations with Isaac Bashevis Singer 621
Carruth, Hayden: The Spirit of Lo lenga d'òc (*review*) 383
Chaves, Jonathan: Translations from Yun Shou-p'ing (*poems*) 605
Clark, Robert S.: American Composition Now 141
Tannhäuser and *Don Carlos* 485
Cotter, James Finn: Poetry Reading (*review*) 207
Whispers of the Word (*review*) 551
Couser, G. Thomas: The Shape of Death in American Autobiography 53
Dacey, Philip: He Goes to a Costume Party Dressed as Gerard Manley Hopkins (*poem*) 120
Davenport, Gary: Grandfather Dictionary (*review*) 704
Davenport, Guy: Post-Modern and After (*review*) 229
Donoghue, Denis: Lowell at the End (*review*) 196
Flaherty, Francis: Schumacher's Guide (*review*) 227
Flower, Dean: Ishmaels All (*review*) 170
The Way We Live Now (*review*) 343
Fiction Moralized (*review*) 530
Garis, Robert: Croce Recognized (*review*) 337
Hazo, Samuel: The Experience of the Idea (*review*) 536
Helmling, Steven: At the Museum, and After; The Snake; With the Lights On; Two Weeks After an April Frost (*poems*) 463
Hill, Jeanne Foster: The Bones that Shape the Emptiness (*poem*) 117
Hitchcock, George: Going Back There (*poem*) 635
Hoffman, Daniel: Folk Tale; Himself (*poems*) 269
Howard, Maureen: Fiction Chronicle (*review*) 178
Facts of Life (*memoir*) 249
Huddle, David: Sketching Hannah (*story*) 609
Ignatow, David: The Metamorphosis; "In this dream"; "There's the reality"; The Life They Lead; "I want to be buried"; "The seasons doubt themselves" (*poems*) 107
King, Edmund L.: Lorca, Guillén, Salinas, and Aleixandre (*review*) 693
Knies, Elizabeth: I Look Out; Legend; Circles (*poems*) 483
Kubal, David: Lionel Trilling: The Mind and Its Discontents 279
McDowell, Robert: The Spirit in Mid-Winter Rises (*review*) 202
Poetry Chronicle (*review*) 373
McGuire, Michael: The Shadow of the Mountain (*story*) 436
Marshall, Jack: Hurrying Ends (*story*) ... 305
May, Derwent: The Family (*story*) 596
Mazzaro, Jerome: Noon, Toronto; Jungle Gardens; Driving South; Buffalo/Stasis (*poems*) 111
Millard, Charles W.: American Style and Quality 163
The Matisse Cut-Outs 321
The Later Monet 637
Morley, Hilda: "So to suspend it" (*poem*) 296
That Could Assuage Us (*poems*) 425
Mudrick, Marvin: I Don't Care What Mama Don't Allow (*review*) 187
Issues and Answers; or, If You've Tried It Don't Knock It (*review*) 356
Portnoy's Bachelor Uncle (*review*) 507
Father Knows Best (*review*) 649
Parini, Jay: Beginning the World; Tanya; Illimitable Kingdom (*poems*) ... 618
Parker, Douglass: Ars Poetica I: Beginning (*poem*) 631
Pastan, Linda: Waiting for My Life; Elegy (*poems*) 123
Perlberg, Mark: The Leap (*poem*) 302
Phillips, Robert: The Stone Crab: A Love Poem; Decks; Burchfield's World; Soft and Hard (*poems*) 269

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pinsky, Robert: Dreaming of Deafness (*poem*) 127
Plummer, William: Three Versions of Faulkner 466
Pritchard, William H.: The Anne Sexton Show (*review*) 387
Telling Stories (*review*) 517
Ray, David: Hymn to Aunt Edris (*poem*) 300
Reiss, James: Anna's Song (*poem*) 125
Sandy, Stephen: Near Pamet Marsh (*poem*) 277
Serchuk, Peter: Bent Tree; Summer on Green Lake; Last Words at Marblehead (*poems*) 298
James Wright: The Art of Survival (*review*) 548
Sheppard, Patricia: Advertisement; The Whistling Swans (*poems*) 122
Siegel, Marcia B.: The Cake with the Stripper Inside 157
Panov: The Making of a Myth..... 644
Simon, John: Theatre Chronicle..... 147
Sinyavsky, Andrei: Bennett Award Acceptance Speech, 1978..... 565
Smith, Dave: The White Holster; Raw Light, Mountain Lake; In the Yard, Late Summer (*poems*) 591
Smith, Dinitia: Magic (*story*) 67
Spacks, Patricia Meyer: Us or Them 34
Necessities of Memory (*review*) 663
Starobinski, Jean: A Reading of *The Magic Flute*, trans. by Frederick Brown 409
States, Bert O.: The Art of Dreaming 571
Taggart, Shirley Ann: Ghosts Like Them (*story*) 449
Varney, Ronald: The New World (*review*) 221
Wagoner, David: Love Song After a Nightmare; Book Sale (Five Cents Each) (*poems*)..... 273
Waniek, Marilyn: I Imagine Driving Across Country; My Grandfather Walks in the Woods (*poems*) 114
Young, Vernon: The Grotesque in Some Recent Films..... 329
Declarations of Waugh (*review*)..... 500
Poetry Chronicle: First, Second and Third Person—Singular (*review*) 677
Youngren, William H.: Schoenberg, Rosen and the Common Listener..... 129

BOOKS REVIEWED

(Listed by Author)

Ackerman, Diane: *Wife of Light* (Samuel Hazo)..... 536
Adams, Robert Martin: *Afterjoyce: Studies in Fiction After Ulysses* (Guy Davenport) 229
Alberti, Rafael: *The Lost Grove: Autobiography of a Spanish Poet in Exile*, trans. by Gabriel Berns (Edmund L. King) 693
Aleixandre, Vicente: *Twenty Poems*, trans. by Lewis Hyde and Robert Bly, ed. by Lewis Hyde (Edmund L. King) 693
Ames, Lois and Linda Gray Sexton, eds.: *Anne Sexton: A Self-Portrait in Letters* (William H. Pritchard) 387
Ammons, A. R.: *The Snow Poems* (Robert McDowell)..... 202
Selected Poems: 1951–1977 (Samuel Hazo)..... 536
Ashbery, John: *Houseboat Days* (James Finn Cotter)..... 207
Bainbridge, Beryl: *Injury Time* (Dean Flower) 343
Bate, W. Jackson: *Samuel Johnson* (David Bromwich)..... 491
Berger, Morroe: *Real and Imagined Worlds: The Novel and Social Science* (Guy Davenport)..... 229
Berry, Wendell: *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (Dean Flower) 170
Blotner, Joseph, ed.: *Selected Letters of William Faulkner* (William Plummer).. 466
Bly, Robert: *This Body is Made of Camphor and Gopherwood* (James Finn Cotter)..... 207
Blumenthal, Joseph: *The Printed Book in America* (Leslie George Katz)..... 709
Borsten, Orin and Meta Carpenter Wilde: *A Loving Gentleman: The Love Story of William Faulkner and Meta Carpenter* (William Plummer) 466
Brooks, Cleanth: *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* (William Plummer)..... 466
Chang, H. C., ed. and trans.: *Chinese Literature, Vol. 2: Nature Poetry* (James Finn Cotter)..... 207
Christian, R. F., sel., ed. and trans.: *Tolstoy's Letters* (Marvin Mudrick)..... 649
Croce, Arlene: *Afterimages* (Robert Garis) 337

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Davie, Michael, ed.: *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh* (Vernon Young) 500
Davison, Peter: *A Voice in the Mountain* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Deagon, Ann: *There Is No Balm in Birmingham* (Vernon Young) 677
Dinesen, Isak: *Carnival: Entertainments and Posthumous Tales* (Maureen Howard) 178
Donleavy, J. P.: *The Destinies of Darcy Dancer, Gentleman* (Maureen Howard). 178
Drabble, Margaret: *The Ice Age* (Maureen Howard) 178
Dryden, Edgar A.: *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Poetics of Enchantment* (Dean Flower) 170
Dubus, Andre: *Adultery & Other Choices* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Dunne, John Gregory: *True Confessions* (Maureen Howard) 178
Dyer, Denys: *The Stories of Kleist* (Marvin Mudrick) 187
Ellman, Richard: *The Consciousness of Joyce* (Guy Davenport) 229
Everwine, Peter: *Keeping the Night* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Ferguson, Frances: *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit* (Jonathan Arac) 365
Foote, Shelby: *September, September* (Dean Flower) 343
Gardner, John: *On Moral Fiction* (Dean Flower) 530
Gilliatt, Penelope: *Splendid Lives* (Dean Flower) 343
Godwin, Gail: *Violet Clay* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Goodman, Paul: *The Break-up of Our Camp: Stories 1932–1935* (William H. Pritchard 517
Gordon, Mary: *Final Payments* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Graham, Desmond, ed.: *The Complete Poems of Keith Douglas* (Samuel Hazo).. 536
Greene, Graham: *The Human Factor* (Dean Flower) 343
Gregory, Arthur: *The Past Now* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Guillén, Jorge: *Cantico: A Selection*, ed. by Norman Thomas di Giovanni (Edmund L. King) 693
Hailey, Elizabeth Forsythe: *A Woman of Independent Means* (Patricia Meyer Spacks) 663
Handke, Peter: *The Left-Handed Woman* (Patricia Meyer Spacks) 663
Hannah, Barry: *Airships* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Hanzlicek, C. G.: *Stars* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Hardy, Barbara: *The Advantage of Lyric: Essays on Feeling in Poetry* (Jonathan Arac) 365
Harper, Michael S.: *Images of Kin* (Robert McDowell) 373
Hazard, James: *A Hive of Souls: Selected Poems 1968–1976* (James Finn Cotter).. 207
Heiserman, Arthur: *The Novel Before the Novel: Essays and Discussions about the Beginnings of Prose Fiction in the West* (Guy Davenport) 229
Helprin, Mark: *Refiner's Fire: The Life and Adventures of Marshall Pearl, Foundling* (Dean Flower) 343
Hikmet, Nazim: *The Epic of Sheik Bedreddin*, trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (Samuel Hazo) 536
Hollander, John: *Spectral Emanations* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Holloway, John: *The Proud Knowledge: Poetry, Insight and the Self, 1620–1920* (Jonathan Arac) 365
Holmes, Philip: *A Place to Stand* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Homberger, Eric: *The Art of the Real: Poetry in England and America since 1939* (Jonathan Arac) 365
Howes, Barbara: *A Private Signal* (Robert McDowell) 373
Huff, Robert: *The Ventriloquist: New and Selected Poems* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Hugo, Richard H.: *31 Letters and 13 Dreams: Poems* (James Finn Cotter)..... 207
Inez, Colette: *Alive and Taking Names* (Robert McDowell) 373
Isaacs, Susan: *Compromising Positions* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Jensen, Laura: *Bad Boats* (Robert McDowell) 373
Kafka, Franz: *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors* (Marvin Mudrick) 507
Kanfer, Stefan: *The Eighth Sin* (Patricia Meyer Spacks) 663
Kinnell, Galway, trans.: *The Poems of François Villon* (Robert McDowell) 373
Klinkowitz, Jerome: *The Life of Fiction* (Guy Davenport) 229
Kumin, Maxine: *The Retrieval System* (Vernon Young) 677
Lazard, Naomi: *The Moonlit Upper Deckerina* (Vernon Young) 677
Ordinances (Vernon Young) 677
Lebeaux, Richard: *Young Man Thoreau* (Dean Flower) 170
Lelchuk, Alan: *Shrinking* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Lieberman, Laurence: *Unassigned Frequencies: American Poetry in Review, 1964–77* (James Finn Cotter) 551

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

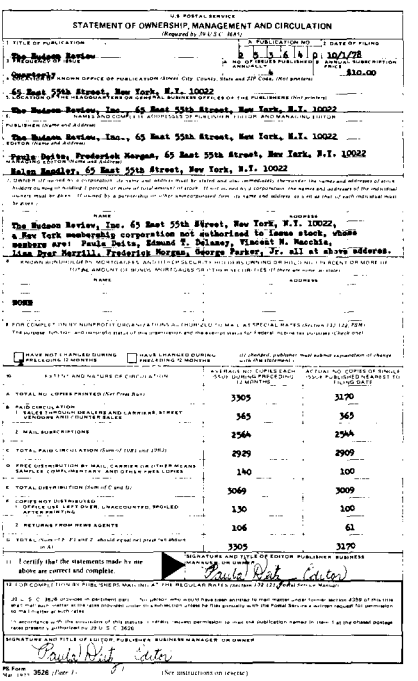
Lorca, Federico García: *Songs*, trans. by Philip Cummings with the assistance of Federico García Lorca, ed. by Daniel Eisenberg (Edmund L. King) 693
McCarthy, Gerald: *War Story* (James Finn Cotter) 207
McConnell, Frank D.: *Four Postwar American Novelists: Bellow, Mailer, Barth, and Pynchon* (Guy Davenport) 229
McHale, Tom: *The Lady from Boston* (Dean Flower) 343
Manning, Frederick: *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Masson, J. Moussaieff and W. S. Merwin, trans.: *Sanskrit Love Poetry* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Merton, Thomas: *Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (Robert McDowell) 373
Merwin, W. S. and J. Moussaieff Masson, trans.: *Sanskrit Love Poetry* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Meyers, Bert: *Sunlight on the Wall* (Robert McDowell) 373
Monegal, Emir Rodríguez, ed. with the assistance of Thomas Colchie: *The Borzoi Anthology of Latin American Literature* (Ronald Varney) 221
Morrison, Toni: *Song of Solomon* (Maureen Howard) 178
Murray, K. M. Elisabeth: *Caught in the Web of Words* (Gary Davenport) 704
Nemerov, Howard: *The Collected Poems of Howard Nemerov* (James Finn Cotter) .. 207
O'Brien, Darcy: *A Way of Life, Like Any Other* (Dean Flower) 343
Pacheco, José Emilio: *Don't Ask Me How the Time Goes By: Poems, 1964–1968*, trans. by Alastair Reid (Samuel Hazo) 536
Palmer, Michael: *Without Music* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Panov, Valery with George Feifer: *To Dance* (Marcia B. Siegel) 644
Parthasarathy, R., ed.: *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Pastan, Linda: *The Five Stages of Grief* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Peake, C. H.: James Joyce: *The Citizen and the Artist* (Guy Davenport) 229
Penner, Jonathan: *Going Blind* (Maureen Howard) 178
Pevear, Richard: *Night Talk* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Piercy, Marge: *The High Cost of Living* (Dean Flower) 343
Pritchett, V. S.: *Selected Stories* (Patricia Meyer Spacks) 663
Prou, Suzanne: *La Belle Edmée* (Patricia Meyer Spacks) 663
Pryce-Jones, David, ed.: *Evelyn Waugh and His World* (Vernon Young) 500
Rader, Dotson: *Miracle* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Ramke, Bin: *The Difference Between Night and Day* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Rankin, Paula: *By the Wreakmaster's Cottage* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Raphael, Frederick: *The Glittering Prizes* (Dean Flower) 343
Rich, Adrienne: *The Dream of a Common Language, Poems 1974–1977* (Vernon Young) 677
Robert, Marthe: *The Old and the New: From Don Quixote to Kafka* (Guy Davenport) 229
Roth, Philip: *The Professor of Desire* (Maureen Howard) 178
Rubin, David, trans. and ed.: *A Season on the Earth: Selected Poems of Nirala* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Rutsala, Vern: *Paragraphs* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Salinas, Pedro: *My Voice Because of You*, trans. and introduced by Willis Barnstone, preface by Jorge Guillén (Edmund L. King) 693
Sandeen, Ernest: *Collected Poems: 1953–1977* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Schaeffer, Susan Fromberg: *Time in Its Flight* (Patricia Meyer Spacks) 663
Schumacher, E. F.: *A Guide for the Perplexed* (Francis Flaherty) 227
Seelye, John: *Prophetic Waters: The River in Early American Life and Literature* (Dean Flower) 170
Seidel, Michael: *Epic Geography: James Joyce's Ulysses* (Guy Davenport) 229
Sexton, Linda Gray and Lois Ames, eds.: *Anne Sexton: A Self-Portrait in Letters* (William H. Pritchard) 387
Shapiro, Karl: *Collected Poems: 1940–1978* (Samuel Hazo) 536
Sheed, Wilfrid: *Transatlantic Blues* (Dean Flower) 343
Shore, Jane: *Eyelevel* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Shulman, Alix Kates: *Burning Questions* (William H. Pritchard) 517
Singer, Isaac Bashevis: *Shosha* (Patricia Meyer Spacks) 663
Smith, Dave: *Cumberland Station* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Snodgrass, W. D.: *The Führer Bunker: A Cycle of Poems in Progress* (James Finn Cotter) 207
Six Troubadour Songs (Hayden Carruth) 383

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Spengemann, William C.: *The Adventurous Muse: The Poetics of American Fiction, 1789–1900* (Dean Flower)..... 170
Stafford, William: *Stories That Could be True* (Samuel Hazo)..... 536
Stern, Richard: *Natural Shocks* (Dean Flower)..... 343
Stevens, John, trans.: *One Robe, One Bowl: The Zen Poetry of Ryōkan* (James Finn Cotter)..... 207
Strand, Mark: *The Monument* (Samuel Hazo)..... 536
Swanger, David: *The Shape of Waters* (Robert McDowell)..... 373
Tate, Allen: *Collected Poems, 1919–1976* (Robert Buffington)..... 393
Theroux, Paul: *Picture Palace* (William H. Pritchard)..... 517
Thompson, Susan Otis: *American Book Design and William Morris* (Leslie George Katz)..... 709
Van Brunt, H. L.: *For Luck: Poems 1962–1977* (Robert McDowell)..... 373
Vidal, Gore: *Kalki* (William H. Pritchard)..... 517
Watkins, Floyd C.: *In Time and Place: Some Origins of American Fiction* (Dean Flower)..... 170
Wilde, Meta Carpenter and Orin Borsten: *A Loving Gentleman: The Love Story of William Faulkner and Meta Carpenter* (William Plummer)..... 466
Williams, Joy: *The Changeling* (Patricia Meyer Spacks)..... 663
Wilson, Edmund: *Letters on Literature and Politics* (Marvin Mudrick)..... 356
Wright, James: *To a Blossoming Pear Tree* (Peter Serchuk)..... 548
Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud: *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Novel* (Guy Davenport)..... 229

Volume XXXI

Spring 1978 (No. 1) pages 1–240; Summer 1978 (No. 2) pages 241–400; Autumn 1978 (No. 3) pages 401–560; Winter 1978–79 (No. 4) pages 561–720



U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. TITLE OF PUBLICATION: The Hudson Review
A. PUBLICATION NO.: 0 0 5 1 6 4 0
2. DATE OF FILING: 10/1/78
3. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE: Quarterly
3A. NO. OF ISSUES PUBLISHED ANNUALLY: 4
3B. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: $10.00
4. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION (Street, City, County, State and ZIP Code) (Not printers): 65 East 55th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022
5. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF THE HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS (Not printers): The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022
6. NAMES AND COMPLETE ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR
PUBLISHER (Name and Address): The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022
EDITOR (Name and Address): Paula Deitz, Frederick Morgan, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022
MANAGING EDITOR (Name and Address): Ralph Sandler, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022
7. OWNER (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also, immediately thereunder, the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given.)

NAME	ADDRESS
The Hudson Review, Inc.	65 East 55th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022, a New York membership corporation not authorized to issue stock, whose members are: Paula Deitz, Edmund T. Delaney, Vincent H. Mancini, Lisa Drew Morrill, Frederick Morgan, George Parker, Jr. all at above address.

8. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES (If there are none, so state)

NAME	ADDRESS
NONE	

9. FOR COMPLETION BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORIZED TO MAIL AT SPECIAL RATES (Section 132.122, PSM)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes (Check one)
☐ HAVE NOT CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS ☐ HAVE CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

10. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION	AVERAGE NO. COPIES EACH ISSUE DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS	ACTUAL NO. COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUE PUBLISHED NEAREST TO FILING DATE
A. TOTAL NO. COPIES PRINTED (Net Press Run)	3305	3170
B. PAID CIRCULATION 1. SALES THROUGH DEALERS AND CARRIERS, STREET VENDORS AND COUNTER SALES	365	365
2. MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS	2564	2544
C. TOTAL PAID CIRCULATION (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2)	2929	2909
D. FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MAIL, CARRIER OR OTHER MEANS SAMPLES, COMPLIMENTARY, AND OTHER FREE COPIES	140	100
E. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (Sum of C and D)	3069	3009
F. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED 1. OFFICE USE, LEFT OVER, UNACCOUNTED, SPOILED AFTER PRINTING	130	100
2. RETURNS FROM NEWS AGENTS	106	61
G. TOTAL (Sum of E, F1 and 2 - should equal net press run shown in A)	3305	3170

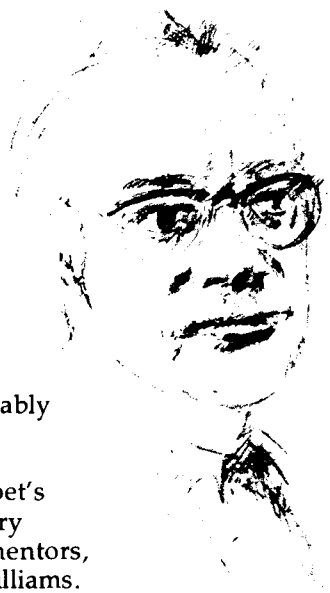
11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EDITOR, PUBLISHER, BUSINESS MANAGER, OR OWNER: Paula Deitz, Editor

12. FOR COMPLETION BY PUBLISHERS MAILING AT THE REGULAR RATES (Section 132.121, Postal Service Manual)
39 U.S.C. 3626 provides in pertinent part: "No person who would have been entitled to mail matter under former section 4359 of this title shall mail such matter at the rates provided under this subsection unless he files annually with the Postal Service a written request for permission to mail matter at such rates."
In accordance with the provisions of this statute, I hereby request permission to mail the publication named in Item 1 at the phased postage rates presently authorized by 39 U.S.C. 3626.
SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EDITOR, PUBLISHER, BUSINESS MANAGER, OR OWNER: Paula Deitz, Editor

PS Form 3526 (Form 1) (See instructions on reverse)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Lowell



Life and Art

STEVEN GOULD AXELROD

This major biography of Robert Lowell, the first published since his death, exposes the full relationship between the poetry and the personal and national experience to which it is so remarkably connected. In his discussion of Lowell's poetic achievements, Steven Axelrod establishes the poet's inheritance of the American literary tradition and the influence of his mentors, Allen Tate and William Carlos Williams.
Illus. $14.50

Marianne Moore

The Poet's Advance

LAURENCE STAPLETON

"... An excellent critical study.... With respect for Moore's intentions, Stapleton teases the meaning out of poem after poem, fathoming their dazzling range of associations. This is one of the few in-depth examinations of Moore and a veritable reader's guide to her poetry."—*Publishers Weekly*
Illus. $15.00

Write for our new Language and Literature Catalogue.

Princeton University Press

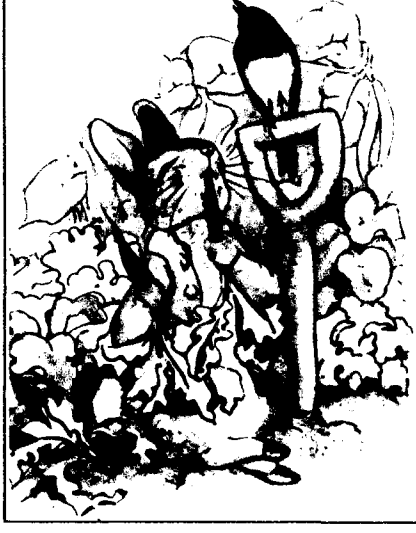
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Do you believe in fairy tales?

If you, like Peter Pan, refuse to grow too old to believe in and love stories like *Charlotte's Web*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *The Wind in the Willows*, read *Fairy Tales and After.*

It's one of those rare books that take children's stories seriously, for their own sake. Not for their educational value, or sociological significance, but for themselves. And those of you who still believe.



Fairy Tales and After

From Snow White to E.B.White

Roger Sale

$11.00

Harvard University Press
Cambridge,
Massachusetts 02138

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED